



**Planning/ Career Center Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, October 17, 2017

8:00 a.m.

255 Essex Street, 4th Floor

Lawrence, MA 01840

Members Present: Juan Yepez, Chairman
Ron Contrado, Andrew Herlihy, Bob Wescott,

Members Absent: Mike Munday, Abel Vargas

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono

Other: Linda Rohrer

I. Approval of Minutes of the September 19, 2017 meeting

A quorum being present, Juan Yepez, called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. and then called for a motion on the minutes of the September 19, 2017 meeting.

Motion by Bob Wescott, seconded by Ron Contrado, to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2017 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

II. Performance Summary as of September 31, 2017

Rafael said that, at the end of the 1st quarter, any percentage of plan under or over 25% is a bit behind or ahead. He said that employer services numbers were higher because of a change in reporting criteria. Linda Rohrer said she would check on those numbers. Bob Wescott asked about the labor exchange jobs and Linda said they have to call people a lot to find out their employment status. She then said that all of the 314 jobs reported are employment numbers entered by career center staff. Linda said that in the past, career center staff worked extended hours in order to call customers who had gone home from work. We then got more employment information. That stopped after the move to Essex Street because the staff doesn't feel safe working late. That may change in the future.

III. Budget Update as of September 30, 2017

Rafael said that the first payment to NECC was issued for \$148,000 but it does not encompass all funds owed at the end of August. Rafael explained that Tracy does not want to disburse funds to NECC until they are able to cost allocate and track their allocations.

Rafael said that the Polartec funding doesn't look good. He spoke to Eddie Bartkewicz and he informed the WIB that the 40 day clock started again. Rafael added that the hurricanes and wild fires affect our NDWG funding and he doubts Polartec will materialize.

Juan asked what happens then and Rafael said the WIB and Career Center will have lay-offs. He cannot tell the college what they have to do but they are likely to have lay-off as well. Ron asked if rainy day funds can be tapped into and Rafael said there's about \$800,000 left in there. Ron asked if it can be used and replenished and Rafael said that may not be a good idea because the agency has monthly expenses of about \$500,000 and the rainy day fund is used when contract funds don't come in right away. In the past, it's also used to cover vacation and retiree payouts.

Juan expressed confusion as to who is responsible for making lay-off decisions. Rafael said NECC is responsible for career center lay-off decisions. Juan asked if Polartec funding was in our annual budget and Rafael said yes.

Ron Contrado asked if the WIB has borrowing capabilities and Rafael said yes, although it's a bit complicated. He explained that the City of Lawrence is our fiscal agent and he, Rafael, is the Mayor's delegate. For something like this Rafael would ask the Mayor to make the final decision. Ron expressed his disfavor with layoffs when there are rainy-day funds and loans available. Juan said he is not in favor of a loan because it's risky to take on a debt with uncertain income sources.

Juan asked what NECC hopes to gain and Rafael said that NECC does not expect monetary gain. Andrew added that NECC hopes to strengthen its employer relationships. Juan asked if NECC can take care of the shortfall and Rafael said there's no clarity on that but he doubts it. They don't want to make money but neither do they want to lose it. Andrew asked if the full Board will hear about the Polartec situation and Rafael said yes.

Linda asked why was there a 40 day clock start and Rafael said that the reason was not indicated.

Juan concluded by saying that the full board will be notified of the situation.

Rafael announced his plans to retire in July 2018. He said that he will also share that news at the annual meeting scheduled for October 24th.

IV. Grants Update

Susan Almono gave the grants update. She announced that the WIB received \$75,000 in funding for YouthWorks year-round. This year the proposals were competitive and only five (5) WIBs received funding. We will be working with Haverhill High School for an 'IT Career Accelerator' program.

The WIB also submitted a Learn and Earn application for Commonwealth Corporation WCTF FY18 funding. If awarded, the grant will have a planning and then an implementation phase. Our proposed Learn to Earn Initiative will focus on motivated Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) parents (including guardians). They will receive the training and supports necessary to secure entry level, career pathway jobs in advanced manufacturing. There were four area agencies that submitted proposals.

Rafael added that next week, at the Workforce Board Association meeting, the WIB may receive the partnership award. Working with unions may be a challenge but Susan and Matthias have done a great job partnering with them.

Susan concluded by saying there was an article published in the Boston Globe about the STTEP training we're doing in partnership with Teamsters Local 25.

V. Career Center Report

Linda said that there is a Jobs Fair today, from 10 to 1pm at NECC in Haverhill. 35 employers from various industries are participating.

ValleyWorks is number one in the State for serving the most Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants. Not all of the UI claimants are VWCC members. Linda said that the ITA slots are low but that the numbers will increase since VWCC just received authorization to use up more slots.

Linda explained that recruitment efforts for a youth-focused electronic assembly program is underway. On Tuesday, she will be going to 'El Taller' in downtown Lawrence to do recruitment.

Linda concluded by saying VWCC will be conducting staff development at 'El Taller' a week from today.

VI. WIOA Update

Rafael said that Chairman Matthews approved Marina Zhavoronkova as our guest speaker at the annual meeting on October 24th. She'll present a lot of good information on NE MA and at least one board member wants to be better informed of current regionalization talks.

Rafael continued by saying that we don't have clarity on what's going to happen with manufacturing. It is likely to continue getting smaller but it is still one of the largest industries in this region and provides good salaries to thousands of employees. We can't afford to stop job training for this industry but we have to be careful not to overdo. Susan added that we are not training people to fill new jobs. There may be little growth in manufacturing but because manufacturing workers are older and there are so many of them, we can fill up empty slots as older people retire.

Andy said he doesn't believe manufacturing is shrinking. The whole sector is not going down but only parts of it. A company as big as Polartec may go down but other little ones are growing. Rafael said that if we have the workforce, manufacturing employers will continue to do business in this area.

Bob added that we should manufacture fabricated homes for 3rd world countries.

VII. Other Business

Juan asked about the status of a new WCC Haverhill location and Rafael said there has been discussions but nothing new is on tap yet. Andy added that NECC put in an RFP for a test kitchen and the career center may be a part of that site.

Juan asked Rafael to announce his retirement to the Board. He asked if the Mayor is the one who appoints a replacement and Rafael said yes.

VIII. Adjourn (vote required)

Having no further business Andrew Herlihy made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Bob Wescott, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Corina Ruiz

Recorder