



## **Planning/ Career Center Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, March 14, 2017**

7:30 a.m.

255 Essex Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor

Lawrence, MA 01840

Members Present: Juan Yepez, Chairman  
Ron Contrado, Abel Vargas, Bob Wescott,

Members Present  
Remotely: Rosalin Acosta, Andrew Herlihy, Mike Munday,

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono, Corina Ruiz

Others: Eddie Bartkiewicz, Peter Matthews, Amy Weatherbee

### **I. Approval of Minutes of the February 21, 2017 meeting**

A quorum being present, Juan Yepez, called the meeting to order at 7:42 a.m. and then called for a motion on the minutes of the February 21, 2017 meeting.

**Motion by Bob Wescott, seconded by Rosalin Acosta, to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2017 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.**

### **II. Performance Summary as of February 28, 2017**

Rafael Abislaiman said that besides the large increase in employers served there aren't many surprises. The adult category has a substantial increase in average wage. Overall everything looks good. We are a little behind with program exiters as usual, however, that normally changes towards to end of the fiscal year. The negative exits looks high but that is because they are small numbers. Amy added that from November on the focus was on the move. The VWCC management team pivots every year around this time and starts pulling participant related reports to make sure everything is being captured. We will soon start work on FY'18 plan and will need to look at the participants to figure out the carry-ins and insure it's a clean list of people. Amy concluded by saying that she will be talking to Joe Eid about the training related placement report because the placement is entered in MOSES but it's not showing up in the report.

### **III. Budget Update as of February 28, 2017**

Rafael said there continues to be significant dollar accrual numbers because there are vendors who have yet to bill us. The vendor fees are related to costs still being negotiated with the City related to the building and move.

### **IV. Grants Update**

Susan Almono presented the committee with a grants update chart. The EPA program is recruiting for the Spanish cohort that is slated to start April 28<sup>th</sup>. Through the WCTF grant we will train 32 participants to be CDL B drivers. We have trained 6 so far and 5 are working training related jobs making an average of \$21.40/hr. The CommCorp Healthcare grant that just ended trained incumbent direct care workers in Mary Immaculate and Nevins to improve patient quality of life and reduce costs. NAMC is a consortium of four WIBS, career centers, community colleges, technical schools and employers that provides training in CNC machining and electronic assembly. We have trained 142 people and of those 114 are working making an average of \$17/hr.

Susan continued by explaining the current grants targeting youth. We have the CommCorp YouthWorks Year Round which provides subsidize employment and job readiness/job seeking skills workshops for at-risk out of school youth. DESE Connecting Activities provides high school students with career awareness, exploration and immersion. The FY17 Summer YouthWorks application will be submitted at the end of this month. That program will provide 229 youth with subsidized summer employment and job readiness/job seeking skills. The MVWIB recently received \$10,000 for the MassDevelopment Amp It Up grant. These funds will go towards building awareness of advance manufacturing careers amongst high schoolers and counselors. We also received an \$18,000 Connecting Activities Stem grant to offer career exploration and immersion for youth under-represented in STEM at Greater Lawrence Technical School and Haverhill HS.

Susan said we have two pending proposals to hear from. The renewal of the EPA and WCTF grants. We are proposing to train heavy equipment and truck drivers for remediation, DPW, waste hauling, wastewater/storm water jobs. For the \$200,000 WCTF planning grant we proposed to design training for Latino ex-offenders for laborer jobs. Notifications should be happening in the next couple of weeks. Rafael added that pending proposals will be impacted by funding since EPA is on top of the Administration cuts. Juan said this is a great report.

### **V. Career Center Report**

Amy said she wanted to follow-up on the walk-in numbers discussed in the last meeting. As of March 3<sup>rd</sup> of this fiscal year, the career center in Lawrence is the third highest in the state with 17,493 UI claimants walking in looking for navigation assistance. If this is the claimant's first visit to the career center, it's likely they are having a problem with UI claim and they are not happy individuals. Amy said that it is interesting to see that even though our unemployment rate has gone down in the region, the 17,493 number is more than all of the walk-ins in FY'15 (15,690) and FY'16 (11,917). Part of the reason this number could be so high is due to significant layoffs the DUA call center had. Claimants could not get through with their DUA calls so they would visit the career center where they could get assistance. The DUA call center lines are blocked after 20 calls in queue. The career center in Haverhill has seen 1,188 claimants so far in FY'17. Part of that low number is because we don't have a DUA staff onsite.

Amy presented a report that highlights the work that the career center does in terms of accessing additional training funds through the Trade program. The funds are managed at the state level and the pool of money is federal but it does take the same kind of work by VWCC staff. In FY'17 they had 104 new enrollments and have brought an additional \$620,392.53 training funds to support dislocated workers. Amy concluded by saying that all but four of the 104 enrollees were Polartec customers. We are doing great work in getting this group of people retrained and restreamed. Juan questioned some expensive trainings on the report and Amy said that Trade does not have a training cap.

#### **VI. WIOA Update**

Rafael said that the Department of Career Services will start a more rigorous approach to monitoring. They will monitor WIBs and WIBs will more formally monitor career centers. Eddie Bartkiewicz said that is part of WIOA law and he will be meeting with Rafael and other WIB Directors to discuss and explain what the roles and responsibilities are. DCS will continue to conduct fiscal monitoring. Bob Wescott asked if the change was due to a previous failure and Eddie said no. Eddie said he will create a checklist and in it will be included that the 255 Essex St building is ADA accessible. Amy suggested having Glen Gary present at that walkthrough when it happens.

There needs to be more discussion about partner MOAs.

#### **VII. Other Business**

Rafael said that besides a few glitches the building is shaping up nicely.

Andrew Herlihy said that the Haverhill numbers will be interesting with the move and Amy responded that it will be hard to judge. The VWCC started career center seminars for 25 profiled customers. Those customers have to return to the career center a week later as part of RESEA. Amy said the biggest issue is reduction in funds and not being able to run the Haverhill satellite.

Juan Yopez said that pending the release of the OSCC operator, they will enter into executive session to discuss and vote on the MV One-Stop Career Center Proposal Review Committee recommendation for MV One-stop Career Center Operator. Chairman Yopez called for a motion to enter into executive session at 8:42am. **Vote passed unanimously.**

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Rafael said that the review happened in two installments. There were eight reviewers at the first session and four at the second with Francisco Brea attending both. All eleven reviewers recommended Northern Essex Community College as the next MV OSCC operator. Rafael passed out the review tabulation and comments. He said that an appeal is likely.

Rafael said the proposal NECC submitted was outstanding and clearly shows that they support MVWIB goals. The college proposal states that will retain all current VWCC staff and it encourages the VWCC Executive Director to apply for the NECC Career Center Director position. George Moriarty will supervise the Career Center Director. He was Alice Sweeny's predecessor at DCS and previous to that a career center director in Metro North.

The VWCC proposal again indicates that the Executive Director reports to the Mayor of Lawrence and fails to recognize that her job description has her supervised by the Mayor but reporting to the MVWIB Executive Director in terms of performance. The reviewers found the VWCC proposal to be the "same old thing" whereas the NECC proposal was innovative. One of the innovative aspects of the NECC proposal was their "*Hire first, train later*" approach. They are proposing finding suitable employment first and then training employees through Workforce Training Funds. Another highlight of their proposal is the emphasis on assessments that will accelerate and streamline services. They also want to create a better bridge with ABE service providers to coordinate academic remediation and job skill development. It mentions many resources and partnerships that will strengthen the career center.

Rafael said that all current VWCC staff will maintain current public retirement benefits. Their retirement will transfer from the City of Lawrence retirement board to the state effective July 1, 2017. Juan asked if they will become state employees and Rafael said yes. Rafael said that staff may have a change in their vacation, personal and sick time but that the college has yet to comment on that. All interested employees will be laid off for a weekend and come back to their office or cubicle on Monday. There is still the question of whether they will maintain years of employment status if they cash out their vacation and sick day benefits.

Ron Contrado asked if customers will have access to more resources by selecting NECC and Rafael said yes. The career center can tap into the college's additional resources. There was discussion on how there needs to be a training firewall in place. The WIB will make certain that it is in place. Bob Wescott said that NECC's proposal outlines a lot of their management skills and they acknowledge the need for a firewall.

Ron asked if there will be a relationship with Haverhill and the career center. Andrew Herlihy said yes. The City of Haverhill is very concerned and committed to having a career center presence in Haverhill. Andrew said he is comfortable with NECC managing both Haverhill and Lawrence. Sooner or later, NECC will be increasing their presence in downtown Haverhill, closer to the unemployed. They have a lot of experience serving the entire region. By selecting the college the City of Lawrence will also be saved from the pension headache.

Abel said he was concerned that NECC may take activities elsewhere other than 255 Essex Street. Rafael said NECC's proposal clearly states that they commit to staying at 255 Essex Street for the next four years. They also clearly states that there will be a Haverhill site and 'distance' services to other communities such as Amesbury and Newburyport via Skype.

Rafael said the Mayor Rivera is awaiting the Planning Committee's recommendation decision. Juan asked who initiates an appeal and Rafael said the Mayor can green light an appeal from Amy even if he approves the board's recommendation on NECC. Rafael signaled that the process was fair and an appeal won't matter.

Bob said that statistics produced by VWCC shows they have succeeded and NECC wants what VWCC has. VWCC staff should be pleased that they are being sought after. The college is the only entity that can do it better than VWCC.

Abel said that the one great thing for the City is not having to continue investing funds for staff retirement.

Juan asked for a motion to approve the MV One-Stop Career Center Proposal Review Committee's recommendation to select NECC as MV One-Stop Career Center Operator. **Vote passed with 4 in favor and 3 abstentions. Rosalin Acosta, Abel Vargas and Andrew Herlihy abstained.**

Chairman Yepez called for a motion to exit executive session. **Vote passed unanimously.**

### **EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION**

#### **VIII. Adjourn**

**Having no further business Rosalin Acosta made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Abel Vargas, and the meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Corina Ruiz*

Recorder