



**PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes**

Tuesday, April 19, 2016

8:00 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Juan Yepez, Chairman
Rosalin Acosta, Ron Contrado, Dennis DiZoglio, Andrew Herlihy,
Bob Westcott

Members Absent: Mike Munday, Abel Vargas

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono, Mary Kivell

Others: Arthur Chilingirian

I. Approval of Minutes of February 16, 2016

A quorum being present, Juan Yepez called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. Chairman Yepez then called for a motion on the minutes of the February 16, 2016 meeting. Rosalin Acosta expressed concern with some of the minutes and suggested revisions. After some discussion, it was agreed that approval of the minutes should be tabled until revisions were made and then voted on at the next meeting.

Motion by Andrew Herlihy, seconded by Bob Westcott, to table the minutes of the February 16, 2016 meeting until the next meeting. Motion passed.

II. Performance Summary as of 3/31/16

Executive Director Rafael Abislaiman said that, with the exception of the youth category, we are ahead of plan in almost every category. Labor exchange is at 73% which is just 2% less than plan. Bob Westcott asked if we have customers formerly employed in pest control as someone he knows is looking to hire a dependable candidate and he is willing to train.

Chili said that he doesn't know of any applicants in that field and noted that they are just about out of funding for training this year. The only category is the youth 18-24 who they could train if eligible. Rafael said that we serve many more people than we train and we could possibly have someone who is looking for work for that company. Chili advised Bob to have

his contact call him with what the requirements are and he will post the job. He noted that at recent meetings employers have been saying that what they are looking for in an employee is someone who is dependable and who can be trained.

III. Budget Update

Rafael said that we are a little underspent as of the third quarter but we are being cautious due to prospective budget cuts. He reminded members that we are on a two year budget and that the largest expense is personnel. Underspending sometimes helps us avoid sudden lay-offs. He said that youth training related cost numbers will soon come up if our group training RFP is successful. Rosalin asked if fringe includes health care and retirement and Rafael answered yes. Dennis DiZoglio then relayed his agencies experience with the rising cost of health care (20% to 25% increases each year). They raised the deductible to have funds to assist employees needing benefits and are now part of the state GIC Insurance Program.

IV. Out of School Youth Group RFP Update

Rafael said that the OSY Group RFP has been released, a bidders' conference was held and questions and answers have been posted. The closing date for questions is April 22 and proposals are due on April 27th. There were seven training vendors at the bidders' conference. Some vendors were bemoaning the difficulty training kids; others were not. Outreach and recruitment will be a vendor responsibility. Rafael said that the career center would do some outreach but the vendor would be responsible for most of it. There is one vendor from Woburn (manufacturing) and transportation to the site may be tricky.

Rafael said that we were notified Friday that we were one of eight or so sites to receive a Commonwealth Corporation WCTF grant. Our proposal was for heavy equipment operation in partnership with the Teamsters. It is also in Woburn but will be open to adults and youth.

Andy Herlihy said that he feels that we need more and different trainers and training sites like this one. He mentioned that he was reading the questions on the RFP on the website. Ron Contrado mentioned hearing numerous ads on the radio for drivers. Chili said that there have been folks we trained for CDL and CDL-A (able to travel cross country) licenses but some have had difficulty getting a job as employers want drivers with experience.

Rosalin asked if the Planning Committee would be involved in the RFP selection and when. Rafael said that we should have a recommendation by the first half of May and that the Planning Committee would then be making the decision on funding. Discussion on when the next meeting would be followed and it was agreed that the next Planning Committee meeting would be held on Tuesday, May 10, 2016 (later changed). Rafael said that we need to obligate the money by the end of the fiscal year but we can be flexible on the start date.

Rafael said that Susan Almono was instrumental in getting another EPA grant. Susan said that a lot of jobs are coming up in waste water collections due to MS4, a federal mandate on storm water management. There will be opportunities in waste water treatment and also jobs for folks who also know how to operate equipment and have a hoisting license. She mentioned

that Dennis Dizoglio has a group that has been instrumental in studying this. Susan also mentioned that next year there will be environmental remediation training offered in Spanish.

V. Site RFP Update

Rafael reported that he is constrained on the information he can put out as things are still being negotiated by City Hall. He hopes to have more concrete information soon which he will make known to everyone. There is no way we can leave our current site by June 30th and if we move it will be in late summer or early fall.

Regarding WIOA Rafael said that although the State was initially very directive they are still waiting for USDOL guidelines. They still expect all WIBs to RFP their career centers. Rafael said that WIB certification has been postponed but we will need to submit a more complicated Annual Plan. Chili noted that we are still awaiting guidance on that from the state.

VI. Other Business

Bob Westcott reported on the NAWB Conference. He stated that he was impressed by information on a youth outreach program in California. He passed around a handout on the program. The San Bernardino WIB covers a very large area and this group did a one-day session involving music. Youth are involved in designing the program and in selecting who they want to connect with amongst employers and politicians.

The San Bernardino WIB buses 400 to 500 kids to an all-day event for \$150,000. This led him to think of our region and whether we should explore something like this since for our region since three quarters of our youth money must be spent on out of school youth.

Andy Herlilhy mentioned that HUD is conducting a homeless youth count in May. He will forward the contact info to Rafael and Chili. Out of School numbers indicate that we need different types of training programs. He said that many past vendors have stopped providing training. Rafael said that the Lawrence schools are keeping kids until they are 22. That may have some impact on the Lawrence dropout rate going down to 40%. Regarding the San Bernardino program, Rafael feels that kids need to meet employers on employers' terms.

Susan said that homeless and out of school youth have significant barriers. She said that kids need to be empowered. Bob said that he would like to contact the WIB Director in California for further information on this program.

Ron raised the question of economic development in our backyard. He said that we are Lawrence/Haverhill centric and wondered if there is anything at the WIB around economic development for our region and if there should be a closer connection between the WIB and economic development.

Dennis DiZoglio said that his agency (Merrimack Valley Planning Commission) has a comprehensive economic development committee and invited three companies to speak to what attracts them to the region. There is Master Plan and a Merrimack Valley Means Business website. He mentioned that Mayor Rivera realizes that Lawerencians often work out

of Lawrence. He attended an event with the Secretary of Labor in North Andover knowing that any development in North Andover would draw workers from Lawrence. Methuen Mayor Zanni is thinking of using billboards for economic development and Andrew Maylor of North Andover is focused on it as well. Rafael said we have three or four economic development and many chamber directors on our WIB.

Dennis said that there have been 15 storm water management meetings and the WIB was there. Susan said that at one of those meetings she was invited by Steve Gagnon of Methuen to speak before the Essex County Highway Association.

Rafael then referred to some handouts he distributed. One was a list of ITAs by vendor and course name and another was a list of the biggest employment sectors. He also included a list of approved ITAs. He said that the vast majority of our customer training has been in health care. The OSY RFP states that we do not want CNA group training and that we have an expectation that youth graduates' jobs will pay at least \$2 more than minimum wage. Rafael also mentioned that many folks come into the career center and access career center services but not everyone gets training. Only a small minority of the total number served get training.

VII. Adjourn

Having no further business Dennis DiZoglio made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rosalin Acosta seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell,

Recorder