



## **PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday, April 21, 2010**

7:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board  
Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Robert LeBlanc, Michael Munday, Juan Yopez, Charles LoPiano, Joseph Bevilacqua

Members Absent: Anne Randazzo, Ron Contrado, Kevin Page,

Staff Present: Betty Kirk, Fred Carberry, Deborah Andrews, Ruth Marrero

Guests Present: Arthur Chilingirian, Amy Weatherbee

### **I. Approval of Minutes of March 8, 2010**

Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m. Peter then called for a motion on the minutes of the March 8, 2010 meeting.

**Chick LoPiano made a motion to accept the minutes of the March 8, 2010 meeting as submitted. Mike Munday seconded the motion and motion passed.**

### **II. Third Quarter Performance**

Betty Kirk began by noting that the unemployment figures for March indicated a slight decline. She said that Lawrence has gone from 18.4 in February to 16.5 in March. Also, Methuen went from 12.4 to 11.6, Haverhill from 11.1 to 10.5 and Salisbury from 13.3 to 12.1.

Betty then talked about the Third Quarter Career Center Performance stating that total job seekers is at 74% of plan which is lower than last year. Veterans is at 106% of plan and total entered employments is 65% of plan. Employees served is 122% and new to Career Center is 107%. Betty said that participant characteristics is pretty much the same as last year as well as residency. New Hampshire residents obtaining employment in the third quarter is 52% in Massachusetts and 41% in NH. Participants enrolled in the Title I Adult Program is at 70% of plan. Exits and entered employments stand at 29% and 31% of plan respectively. Betty said this is due to the economy and no fault of the Career Center.

Fred Carberry then introduced Ruth Marrero the new MVWIB Resource Development Manager.

Joe Bevilacqua asked if services are not available in New Hampshire and Betty said that 91% worked in Massachusetts and our services are better. Chili said that these dollars are universally accessible and in Massachusetts unemployment benefits are paid at \$600 + \$25 and +\$25 per dependent when in New Hampshire benefits are \$300.

Males enrolled in the Title I Adult Program are up 6 percentage points from last year, 40-54 year olds are at 23% with 12% last year, 55+ are at 6% with 3% last year and basic skills deficient is 59% with last year at 67%. Chili said that the majority of times the unemployed are dislocated workers in this economy who have been out of work for up to 2 years and are, therefore, eligible for consideration as low income adults. This is the reason the participant characteristics have changed for this program.

In the Dislocated Worker Program, total exiters and entered employments stand at 46% and 48% respectively. Last year we stood at 82% and 84% respectively. Those with post secondary education are 46% and 39% last year and college graduates are 33% this year and 23% last year. Betty said that you can see there is a difference in clientele. Total enrollments in the Title I Youth Program is at 67% which is an improvement over last year. Total exiters are 39% and last year were 26%, entered employments are at 53% and last year was 28%. The numbers are definitely better. The entered employment rate is 128% of plan and average exit wage is 118% of plan. Betty noted that we have rfp'd to try to attract more male participation. Betty then said that the Lucent Alcatel Haverhill Paperboard NEG reflects a total of 245 participants with 208 entered employments. This will continue until 6/30/2010. Betty said that the wage retention rate was not what we were hoping for as these companies closed after employees were there for several years and had worked their way up to good wages.

**Motion by Robert LeBlanc seconded by Juan Yopez to accept the Third Quarter Performance Report as submitted. Motion passed.**

### **III. Youth Council Recommendation on refunding LARE OSY Training Programs for an additional year**

Deborah Andrews, MVWIB Youth Program Manager, said that there are three programs offered by LARE which began in January, 2009 to run for 12 months. At the end of the 12 months, they asked for a 90 day extension for placement which was granted. Deborah said that the Education & Medical Assisting Program had 12 participants with educational outcomes of 83% and entered employment rate of 42% with a negatives rate of 58%. The five completers are in 32 hour jobs at \$11 per hour. The 7 that did not finish were for various reasons. LARE was also required to complete a survey and none were done. LARE has two other programs which we are funding that include a survey piece and require a stronger connection between the program and career center.

Robert LeBlanc asked if the program was ahead of plan, why not continue. Deborah said it was due to the low entered employment numbers and Attorney LeBlanc said that it was not unusual in this high unemployment time. Betty Kirk asked if there are jobs for medical assistants and if not why would we fund them. Amy Weatherbee said that the 7 were not

necessarily dropouts. We gave LARE an additional 90 days to do placements. This three month extension ended 3/26. Twelve individuals were over performance in education and 10 of the 12 got credentials. The placement piece is the issue. Atty. LeBlanc said that if the goals were met why not fund. Fred Carberry said that the intent of the program is educational and training skills that ultimately result in getting jobs.

Chili said that the 7 participants met all the criteria and the vendor accepted them into the program. Now the Career Center must place all 7 people. Some didn't get the education or credentialing and employers are looking for experienced workers. Chick LoPiano asked if we talked to LARE and Deborah said that they had met with them and they said the reason was the economy. They are looking to bring in another 12 participants.

Fred Carberry said that we are faced with a program that failed to meet performance goals. Under contract, 75% were supposed to be placed in jobs. Robert LeBlanc said that there were problems with intake and monitoring that have been resolved and the percentage meets or exceeds plan.

**Motion by Robert LeBlanc to recontract with LARE Training for the Education & Medical Assisting Program.**

Juan Yepez wondered if the contracts could be more incentive based. Mike Munday asked if there was not a survey then there should be an exit interview. Fred said that LARE was asked to perform surveys and it wasn't done. Bob LeBlanc said that there are beauracatic issues that need to be resolved as they have met or exceeded the plan numbers. Chick LoPiano asked if we could talk to LARE.

Fred Carberry said that LARE said that there are issues with the trainees and social problems. They also cited the difficult economy to place clients into jobs. Chick wondered if they are refunded how it would hurt the WIB. Fred said that the program is over and was extended 3 months. The entered employment is the primary focus and our goal is not to be educators but to get people into jobs.

**Peter Matthews called for a second on the motion to recontract with LARE Training for the Education Medical Assistance Program. For lack of a second the motion failed.**

Joe Bevilacqua suggested committee members may want to table the discussion to allow additional discussion with LARE.

**Motion by Robert LeBlanc seconded by Chick LoPiano to table the Youth Council recommendation not to fund the three LARE Programs CNA/CHHA, Education & Medical Billing/Coding/Secretarial, and Education & Medical Assisting Programs for an additional year until further discussion with LARE. Motion passed.**

Amy Weatherbee said that we can look at doing cost reimbursement but the RFP is the responsibility of the vendor and career center who identify the baseline to get into the program and are then assessed for supportive services. This is a difficult population to serve and part of the RFP asks how the vendor can ensure retention. We review the budget to see if it is reasonable and the work experience component and employer connections.

Joe said that there needs to be a commitment on the part of the participant and if the vendor selects the participant they share responsibility. Amy said that the customer does sign a client action form to accept them. Chick said that if the vendor is not sure perhaps they can do performance based. Juan said if there are 12 candidates and 5 are viable then they should just pick 5. Chili said that the program costs are constant with instructors etc. Amy said that they review their budgets and they are not bloated in administrative fees. It costs \$3,300 to \$5,500 per participant and we look at the reasonableness of cost. The Medical Coding contract was modified in December for the group that didn't pass certification to allow for retesting.

Joe Bevilacqua wondered if because the vendor picks the client the likelihood of success is reduced. Chili said that they all agree to a case plan. Mike Munday wondered how rigorous the screening is. Chili said that they send 16-17 over for the 12 slots. There is agreement between the customer and the counselor and recruitment is not just done through ValleyWorks. Joe said that vendors need to understand that success is derived from the selection of clients. Chili noted that the population has multiple barriers to employment and that the decision is with the Planning Committee but could have a major impact on the Career Center's incentive award if the performance doesn't succeed.

Joe said that perhaps Chili isn't hearing what the concern is with the outcome and the vendor being aware of their responsibility to the program at inception but not just an outcome issue.

Bob LeBlanc said that he only disagrees with the one program not being refunded and not the other two with poor performance numbers. He would like to have LARE come in and discuss it. Normally he would support the Youth Council but in this case he doesn't agree. Chili said that they take a lot of time to place and make sure clients understand the commitment. Bob LeBlanc said that it is an incentive to the vendor to add clients and spread the risk. He is in favor of performance based.

Ruth Marrero, MVWIB Resource Development Manager, said that she has worked in the city for 13 years and has knowledge of programs through LARE where parents got transportation and free transfers. She found that they start out strong but little by little some will drop out due to problems. Maybe not because they don't want to continue or the program is not good but because of problems as this is a difficult community to serve.

Peter Matthews said that at the conclusion perhaps 5 out of 12 may not be so bad. Amy Weatherbee said that there is no guarantee the current program will be renewed. The plan numbers are negotiated with the vendor in line with WIA goals and looking for a better career

path. Mike Munday asked about the benchmarks for the rest of the state and whether we may be asking too much. Amy explained that when we do the Annual Plan every year the performance goals are adjusted down based on demographics. The goals are for our region and we have to meet them.

#### **IV. Update on High Performing WIB Initiative**

Fred Carberry explained that he and Chairman Bevilacqua met with Undersecretary Jennifer James where she laid out a series of issues on the last submission. The staff has been working on the resubmission package. He referred to some examples such as the HPW overview graphic which represents a scorecard which measures where we are and where we are going regarding priorities and timeframes, etc. Two pages refer to adults and the third page is youth. Fred said that staff has put a lot of work into this. Part of the process has been the establishment of an Executive Committee. This in no way diminishes the Planning Committee's importance at all. The Executive Committee's role is strategic overview of how the WIB operates and the Planning Committee addresses the tactical approach of what we do in detail. Based on our conversation with the state, we were very close last time and Fred said that he feels confident this will fly this time. The tangible benefit is \$100,000 beyond the sustained improvements.

#### **V. Update on Ongoing Initiatives**

- **Ex-Offenders Grant**

Betty Kirk said that the ex-offenders grant is a strategic planning grant to look at what services and gaps are available for ex-offenders and write a plan to get training and jobs. We have contracted with Sal Tabit and are working with parole, probation, the Farm, and employers to identify more employers. We need to identify an incentive for employers to hire ex-offenders and where a CORI is not a problem. We are doing a survey to come up with a plan.

- **Health Care Skills Gap Grant**

The Healthcare Skills Gap Grant is a \$200,000 statewide grant and we are collaborating with Notre Dame, Worksource Partners and NECC for a career ladder bridge between vocational and academic.

- **State Energy Sector Partnership**

The State Energy Sector Partnership is a collaboration between Greater Lowell and North Shore WIBs for a two year grant working with green sector training people to meet the needs for green sector jobs. We are putting together a group of private sector employers to forecast jobs that will be created over the years,

- **Merrimack Valley Manufacturing Advocates**

Fred Carberry said that the first meeting was held last week and is an offshoot of the DOL RIG collaborative with Greater Lowell and Workforce Opportunities of Southern New Hampshire targeting the manufacturing sector in the Merrimack Valley. We hope that this group will continue when the grant ends as an advisory council.

## **VI. Continuity Plan**

Fred Carberry said that at the last Planning Committee meeting and at the full board next week he wanted to assure members that the progress in WIB initiatives will continue. Working with the Mayor on the board in terms of a replacement, the Mayor would like to take his time and find the right replacement. He is looking at structural changes to make sure that the work goes on and Fred said that he is confident that it will.

Joe Bevilacqua said that he asked Fred to set up a meeting with the Mayor to post the job as the selection of the best person won't happen until then. Peter Matthews asked if the selection process is entirely up to the Mayor. Fred said that the Mayor realizes that he needs to respect the autonomy of the board. The candidate will be selected by a selection committee populated by the Mayor and the Chair which will consist of all board members. The recommendation will go to the Mayor who has the final authority.

## **VII. Other Business**

Fred Carberry said that the next MVWIB Quarterly meeting will be held on April 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 a.m. at the Amesbury Sports Park. The Mass WIB will hold a meeting on May 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Publick House in Sturbridge, MA.

There is a new ARRA grant for OJT and a ARRA NEG 90/10 applied for by the state to work to bring the grant to employers. On April 1<sup>st</sup> Mayor Lantigua held a press conference on the American Program for Microsoft proficiency. Chili said that this was for basic computer IT and computer 2003 vouchers. He said that Massachusetts is the first state to use all their vouchers.

Chili then brought up discussion on the last board meeting and where he felt he was spoken to inappropriately and doesn't want to be called on at the next meeting. Chili said that he needs support and asked that copies of the questions be sent to the board. Peter Matthews said that the questions kept coming and it was embarrassing at the last meeting. Fred said that Atty. Anne Randazzo has been in communication with Tom Connors and he noted that there was a public records request which was referred to the city attorney.

Joe said that Fred told him he was retiring and he tried to persuade him to stay but he wants to spend more time with his family. Joe said that Fred has done a tremendous job, is always accessible and has the best interests of the WIB at heart. Chick LoPiano said that he agrees.

Joe then said that the Executive Committee grew out of the High Performing WIB. The state wanted assurance that the board was engaged. The chairs of each committee form the Executive Committee and certify that the board participated in the discussion.

Fred also said that we are looking to create an advocacy committee. He said that it has been a pleasure working with the Planning Committee who he counts on for guidance and support.

**VIII. Adjourn**

**Having no further business Chick LoPiano made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Juan Yopez. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Recorder