



PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, July 2, 2014

7:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board

Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Ron Contrado, Juan Yopez

Members Absent: Robert Leblanc, Michael Munday

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Mary Kivell

Others: Arthur Chilingirian

I. Approval of Minutes of May 28, 2014

A quorum being present Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:55 a.m. and called for a motion on the minutes of the May 28, 2014 meeting.

Motion by Ron Contrado, seconded by Juan Yopez, to approve the minutes of the May 28, 2014 Planning Committee meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

II. Review and Discussion of FY'2015 MVWIB Annual Plan

Executive Director Rafael Abislaiman mentioned that the budget was approved at the Quarterly Board meeting and that it identifies staff, training and other costs. He said that today would be an overview of how we plan to use allocated dollars. He asked Arthur Chilingirian to present the overview.

Chili said that this is the first time in five years that the state has requested narrative answers. He said that services are separated between Youth, Adults and Dislocated Workers. Everyone who comes into the Career Center is invited to come to become a career center member and attend employment seminars and receive other services but many just want to access their unemployment payments and do not become members.

Once participants complete a membership registration they are given information on seminars and on education, jobs, and an orientation on pathways to training. Chili said that there is a veterans' representative who meets one on one with veterans. He stated that a reason that youth split is that they are often not comfortable with the adults. When VWCC works with the youth, that they place more emphasis on education. They

are academically assessed and after the assessments the youth meet with a counselor regarding their interests and look at possible training programs. They also have access to center computers, resume workshops as well as job skills workshops.

Chili said that today the main push is that anyone on UI must have a resume so he said that this year's plan provides more resume workshops. He said that the bottom line is job placement and that ValleyWorks has done very well with placement.

Peter Matthews asked if this plan needs to be approved by the state and Chili said "yes." In addition to the narrative questions and budget, they must provide charts on training dollars and how they will be spent as well as how many people will be trained and outcomes. He said that the state has already set the statewide goals. Chili further stated that youth outcomes are a little different because post-secondary education/college count as positives alongside entered employments. Other than that the youth plan narrative is basically the same as the Adult category one.

Ron Contrado asked who did the answers to the narrative and Chili said that along with input from his staff, he and Barbara Zeimetz prepared the answers and Rafael edited them. Rafael said that there are several things that committee members should be aware of. The first is that not everyone who comes into ValleyWorks is counted. He explained that if someone is on UI they often don't want job training and are not counted as WIA or Wagner Peyser customers. They may be counted if they come back.

The second is that ValleyWorks has state and municipal employees with approximately 65-70% municipal and the 30-35% state employees who have a different mission which is direct employment without training. The municipal employees can take longer with individual customers because they assess customers for both training and jobs.

Sometimes the state staff hold clients to get a job rather than referring them to the municipal staff for training because they feel that only jobs count as positive outcomes for State employees. Chili said that if some clients were moved to the municipal staff more efficiently so that municipal staff could help upgrade customer skills and get them a certificate things would be better and everyone could get credit.

Rafael said that some of our regional policy changes have also made Chili's job more difficult. If the state is holding marketable people to get employment without training and the people we want to get training need to have 7th or 8th grade academic level, then fewer are available to enter the pool that will be trained before they get a job.

Chili continued said that there are several funding sources and spoke of one that is specifically for long term (27 weeks) unemployed people. If those are being held we can't get them a pathway to training. He said that he was told that all clients coming in now are new UI recipients. Chili said that the grant is for 27 week people but municipal staff sometimes don't get the flow from State employment specialists. He said that

often people who have been out of work for 27 weeks to two years may need to refine their skills and upgrade certifications.

Ron Contrado asked if he was saying that he couldn't get people for training. Chili said that there are different funding streams with WIA serving everybody and a NEG grant which had 10 ITAs and 8 OJT slots but we are having difficulty reaching numbers for the new post 27-week UI grant.

Rafael asked how much someone with third grade level knowledge and years of public education will benefit from just weeks of academic training. Ralph stated that he agreed with the Mayor. We need to find a way to get people with third grade academic skills into jobs that don't require a lot of training. That criteria may be different for people who haven't had opportunity to go to school or who speak limited English. They may be very able to learn quickly. But their training may be postponed until the unemployment rate of low income people with average academic skills improves.

Chili said that 90% of employers want resumes and when you have an 18-19 year old who has just dropped out it is hard to put together a resume. Juan Yopez said that he was surprised that all companies need resumes and is inclined to agree with the Mayor regarding entry level, low skilled jobs. He feels that an application should be sufficient. Peter Matthews said that it is good to have a resume to apply for lower level jobs but an application and reference checks for someone who meets the job requirements should be enough. Chili stated that many companies now only accept applications over the internet and resumes are often required.

Rafael said that we expect less funding in the future so we are planning on less one on one and more group sessions as money saving measures. He also mentioned that it looks like WIA will become the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and that it will contain significant modifications. He said that a lot of the way we do things will change. The current 'sequence of services' is one example of something that seems to be going away. There will be less of a distinction between marketable and unmarketable people. We will need to find new ways of determining who gets intensive services and training dollars and when they are to receive them.

Peter Matthews noted that he sees the same approach in financial institutions governed by federal regulations. A one size fits all doesn't work and should be decided on a case by case basis. Clients of different ages and experience need different things. He wondered how to best set policy when dealing with hundreds of people. He cited an example of a medical salesman friend who is out of work but knows he will eventually get a job although he expects it to take three or four months to get something in his field. Rafael agreed that the Feds at best create general plans that we can interpret and adjust to make it work.

Rafael also said that there is a new focus on WIB boards and on reducing duplicate roles. The minimum number of private sector business slots will be kept at 51%. He

noted that the federal debt is \$17 trillion and growing so we can expect drastic cuts if deficit reduction becomes paramount. Employment numbers and the number of people contributing to the system are also suspect.

Peter Matthews said that he thinks that the UI rate is bogus. It is hard to figure out what is going on when comparing the employment rate to the population numbers in the United States. People state that only 41% of the nation is working. In socialist Greece the UI rate is 27% and only 36% are working.

Chili said that UI does a random sampling of people and asks if they are seeking work. If they reply "no" then they are not counted as unemployed. UI numbers also don't include those on disability, welfare or entitlement programs. He said that he feels that the 99 weeks UI was a big disservice because employers wonder what's going with someone who has a two year gap in his or her employment history. He said that if you are on UI you should be required to do six weeks work experience in order to collect UI. It works in Georgia and Texas and was on track here in MA but it did not pass in the legislature. Rafael felt that many unions don't want the Georgia and Texas program models because they see them as jeopardizing their jobs.

Chili also said that Massachusetts is looking at new job training for welfare recipients and has designated \$11m toward that end. That figure is much less than was available in the past when the MA Department of Labor had the program.

Rafael opined that disability insurance has allowed many people to skirt welfare reform and the disability lists may continue to grow because severe changes are in the works for State welfare. For example, the new State law states that if a person leaves Massachusetts for more than four weeks, he or she can be taken off MA welfare.

Motion by Ron Contrado, seconded by Juan Yopez, to accept the FY'2015 Annual Plan as submitted. Motion passed.

III. Other Business

There was no other business.

IV. Adjourn

Having no further business Juan Yopez made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ron Contrado seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell,

Recorder