



**PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes**

Thursday, July 19, 2016

8:00 a.m.

60 Island Street

Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Juan Yepez, Chairman
Rosalin Acosta, Ron Contrado, Andrew Herlihy, Abel Vargas,
Bob Westcott

Members Absent: Dennis DiZoglio, Mike Munday

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono, Mary Kivell

Others: Amy Weatherbee

I. Approval of Minutes of June 21, 2016

A quorum being present, Juan Yepez called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Juan then called for a motion on the minutes of the June 21, 2016 meeting.

Bob Westcott said that he wasn't at the last meeting and had a couple of questions. He referenced page 2 and asked if it was decided that the Planning Committee would also serve as the Career Center Committee. Rafael Abislaiman said that we are looking to populate the committee with additional private sector board members and have the Planning Committee serve as the Career Center Committee with board chairman Peter Matthews appointing the committee members.

Bob said that on page 3 Amy wondered if the negotiating person for DTA would be the local person. Rafael said that DTA hasn't designated anyone to work with us on the Partner MOU – than entity is separate from the Planning/Career Center Committee. Bob also noted that on page 4 there is mention of the state opposition to the site move and wondered if they could stop it. Rafael said that WIOA funds are federal but with a State pass-through and if DCS had sufficient reason it could delay or stop the move. He also said that there isn't sufficient reason to stop it but delays could happen, though those are unlikely because of the costs involved and general support for the move.

Rosalin Acosta asked when the move is projected to happen and Rafael said that we are looking at the fall. Discussion followed on the building site and Abel Vargas mentioned that it could perhaps happen December 1st. He said that the building is sound and the city is replacing the roof, windows and HVAC. The WIB/Career Center will occupy 20,000 sq. ft. and the school department will have 25,000.

Rosalin asked about parking. Amy Weatherbee stated that Lowell, Worcester and Boston all have career centers that don't have parking other than area parking garages. The city said that they will add two handicap parking spaces in the city hall parking lot and that in Massachusetts folks with handicap plates/placards can park in any spot and not be ticketed. Rosalin asked who is paying the architect and Abel said that the WIB is and said that the city is covering everything else.

Rental payments will be discounted to cover the overage on the current lease and all costs will be documented by the WIB and Career Center. Rosalin asked if the intent is to stimulate downtown activity. Abel said yes and also the fact that it will be easier for many Career Center customers to access the Career Center. Many repeat customers reside in North Lawrence. Rafael said that, because of RFP proposal outcomes, we would have had to move in any case. Our current landlord bid \$14.50 and the winning bidder \$12.65 or so. The city will be charging approximately \$11.95 per square foot.

Motion by Bob Westcott, seconded by Ron Contrado, to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2016 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

II. Performance Summary as of Third Quarter ending 6/30/16

Rafael then said that performance numbers may change in the next few weeks because there are usually more job placements at the end of a fiscal year. These are current numbers without UI SSN job matching. When the state does job matching, customer employment numbers usually go up.

Bob said that the Vets numbers are still low and wondered if they are getting served elsewhere. Rafael said that Vets who can get a job are getting them but those who are more troubled are now are vet representative focus and they are harder to serve.

Rafael said that employment numbers are generally better, although a lot of the jobs are part-time. Abel asked if we also track hourly wage numbers. Rafael said that it is hard to do until nine months to a year after employment. We rely on case manager phone calls to customers and employers until wage matching occurs. He said that the majority on UI only come to the Career Center one or two times. We currently get their average earnings and employment numbers about nine months after employment.

Many job sectors are relatively stagnant with growth in health care and in part time retail and food service jobs. He said that good paying jobs are not picking up greatly. Abel said that DOL said that 50,000 jobs have been created and the average wage is up 2%. Rafael said

that federal numbers are good indicators and the trend is good but some of the reports are self-serving.

Bob Westcott again mentioned the youth and the lack of participation and Juan Yepez said that has been the challenge and that is why we issued the new RFP for a group training program and why we are changing outreach. Rafael said that restricting participation to having a high school diploma may have changed things some. He said that we can now be more flexible because unemployment numbers seem to be improving. Our numbers should improve a little just because the youth category now goes up to age twenty-four.

Rafael again noted that, nationwide, 80% of high school graduates and go to college but only a little over 30% graduate in six years. Abel said that of the top 20 students in his graduating class he is only one of two remaining in Lawrence.

Amy said that as we get through the summer we will be doing triage for direct referrals. She spoke with the Lawrence Asst. Supt. about community engagement and referrals for them. We will mix up marketing and look to hire a Youth Developer/Job Coach. Rosalin asked about the summer jobs and Rafael said that we have 265 kids in the summer program with 15 or so partner employers who are also hiring kids and a total of over 80 employers. We are trying to connect the summer youth to WIOA. After they leave summer employment, we will focus on high school graduates who are not going to college and not yet working.

Andy Herlihy said that the number of job skill trainers has reduced significantly over the past few years since he was here. Rafael said that under JTPA almost all programming was group. With the change to ITAs sometimes vendors ended up with more teachers than students. Andy said that we need to figure out how to encourage training. Bob Westcott said that rather than reinvent the wheel maybe we could have the public schools take ITAs. Rafael said that they may be better served at the Vocational schools or Northern Essex Community College because they have more job focused curriculums.

Amy said that GLTS is hiring a workforce person to create programming which will match our needs. We have a good opportunity to leverage the design. Rafael said that we also do group training in manufacturing. Susan Almono said that we need more alternative programming to ITAs. We currently have a grant for Truck Driver/Heavy Equipment Operator Skill Training and also remediation skill training with a grant from the EPA. We need to outreach differently and use every kind of strategy we can think of as it is a huge effort.

Rafael that unions are waiting to hire until employees who are in their late 20s as young people don't appreciate the benefits of a union job until they are more mature. Andy said that he salutes Susan for seeking diversified training. He said that there are 100 kids who don't get into Whittier Voke as it is very competitive and students who want to get in are having to go to Haverhill High School instead of learning a trade. Juan agreed that this is a problem in the state with students trying to get into the different vocational schools. It is almost like a prep school. Rosalin said that the schools are there and too bad they couldn't offer two shifts to

accommodate those that want to attend. Abel said that they are admitting the more academically inclined students and back loading kids who want to work with their hands.

Amy said that apart from their being fewer training providers, other challenges faced in youth skills training is transportation and the CORIs youth often need to pass to attend training schools and then get jobs.

III. Budget Update & Preliminary Annual Plan Budget

Rafael Abislaiman said that Department of Career Services (DCS) required us to submit two budgets, one with everyone on board all year and another that lays State employees off at the end of September. State and Federal budget cuts point to the need to cut about seven State career center employees. Rafael then called on Fiscal Director Tracy Myszkowski to explain the budgets distributed to the committee.

Tracy began stating she had prepared two budgets that include moving costs. The first budget includes everyone currently on board July 1st. There is a deficit of \$406,000 DCS State employee deficit which needs to be resolved. The second budget eliminates seven FTE positions from DCS and the deficit is not in play.

State UI funding has decreased by 77.68%. She said that the State needs to work on a plan to eliminate positions in all regions. Amy said that if there is the reduction in force we need to negotiate down to a default that doesn't just get rid of clerks and keeps all senior positions because we need State clerks and bilingual capacity to help our half of the house.

Tracy continued stating that Polartec funding is added as of 10/1/2016 with a set aside for six staff over nine months through an NEG for \$430,000. She explained that those numbers are tentative. Additional or less grant funding is possible. She continued that any vacancies have been budgeted with the highest cost family plan for health insurance benefits. We may be able to adjust cost downward there. One employment counselor, one Business Services Representative one P/T WIOA Transition Director are vacant at the career center. There are no vacancies at the WIB and its budget is reduced by an Administrative Services Coordinator who will be leaving the WIB by 9/1/2016.

Haverhill rent costs remain the same as last year at \$13.00 per square foot. As mentioned earlier the new space in Lawrence has been calculated at about \$12 per square foot for 19,000 square feet. Tracy said that \$117,000 was budgeted for moving costs that may increase as costs were calculated before the site was selected. To recoup the additional 50% rent at the current location, we will be rent free for about 3.79 months at new location but utilities for the 3.79 months that we are rent free are included in are costs.

The budgets reflect reduced overhead support from DCS. DCS moving costs are also reduced by seven FTE DCS staff in Lawrence but some of those costs have been reallocated to cover vacant staff position spaces.

Tracy said that both budgets were submitted last week and will need to be approved by the board and Mayor once we have final numbers from DCS and know which budget to work with.

IV. Site & WIOA Transition Update

Juan asked who reviewed the Site RFP and Rafael said board members and staff. Discussion ensued on the lease. Rafael said that Peter Matthews signs as board chairman and that he also usually signs forms. He said that the board can certainly take a look at the lease. Hiring an attorney to review the lease was mentioned and Rafael said that if the board wants to hire an attorney we certainly can. He said that the Mayor as CEO is our partner and has final approval.

Juan Yepez said that considering it is a legal document it makes sense to consult with a lawyer. Tracy said that the state also reviews the lease. Amy said that facility maintenance should be in the lease and Juan relayed an experience he had when the landlord wanted him to be responsible for the HVAC system in the lease and he refused when they couldn't produce maintenance records. He said that within a year the chiller went and the cost was \$25,000.

Rosalin said that hiring an attorney to review the lease should be a management decision as part of due diligence and the consensus was that it would be prudent to have an attorney review the lease and should be a management decision.

V. Other Business

Andrew Herlihy said that he is requesting the career center's presence on Saturday, August 27th at a street fair in the Mt. Washington neighborhood. He said that the streets will be blocked off to provide an opportunity to connect with that neighborhood in Haverhill.

VI. Adjourn

Having no further business Rosalin Acosta made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Andrew Herlihy and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell,

Recorder