



PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, August 27, 2014

7:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board

Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Ron Contrado, Michael Munday, Juan Yopez

Members Absent: Robert Leblanc

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Mary Kivell

Others: Joseph J. Bevilacqua, Arthur Chilingirian

I. Approval of Minutes of July 2, 2014

A quorum being present Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:45 a.m. and called for a motion on the minutes of the July 2, 2014 meeting.

Motion by Mike Munday, seconded by Ron Contrado, to approve the minutes of the July 2, 2014 Planning Committee meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

Rafael then asked if we could take the agenda out of order and everyone agreed.

II. Other Business

• Summer Youth Program

Rafael Abislaiman gave a brief update on the Summer Youth Program which is wrapping up. He said that there were 320 participants in YouthWorks for 309 slots and that we will spend all of our relatively large allocation. We also had eighteen private pay slots filled by about twenty youth under the Mayor's Initiative which is likely to be larger next year.

Rafael said that private pay youth caused a higher percentage of programmatic issues than YouthWorks participants. The private pay kids were drawn from the Boys and Girls Club youth who had full schedules. Of the 18 participants there were issues with five of the boys who preferred to play league basketball rather than work.

Rafael said that most of those problems were addressed but two participants didn't last. Now we will need to work out a deal with the private pay employers who donated for employees who did less or lasted less than expected.

Rafael said that he was pleased that board member Ron Contrado had a good experience with the youth he paid for. We also had a few issues with the public pay enrollees but only about 5% of them had problems as opposed to about 20% of the privately paid ones.

Rafael said that this year was the first year that the MVWIB fully ran the Youthworks program rather than just overseeing it. Because of the paperwork, it took time to get the program off the ground. So this year we increased the hours from twenty to thirty per week and will look for ways to reduce the paperwork next year.

This summer, we employed 330 youth in about six weeks and, in addition to complying with our demanding fiscal department, we checked on each youths work authorization, income status, employer agreement and schedules and that every page requiring a signature. Several ValleyWorks staff helped provide youth orientation and case management. Currently, staff review about 330 payroll and remarks sheets per week, each of which are supposed to be signed by participating employers. There are too many possible snafus in the current system.

Going forward, we will look at ways of automating employer payroll and remarks input. We may use a google program or a custom program to first input planned hours and then only track variations from the plan.

Rafael closed by saying that the larger number of jobs were not in for-profit businesses but in municipal services and non-profits. But we did increase private sector participation, largely due to the Mayor's Initiative.

Arthur Chilingirian next reported on the Year Round program. Last year, our Year Round YouthWorks program served 100 kids. This year our funding has been cut to \$83,000 which is only enough for 43 kids. Rafael said that figure is based on \$1,800 per kid. Last year when there was more funding and possibly due to Lawrence Public Schools extended day, we didn't serve all of the numbers planned. We will not have that problem next year.

- **Update on Washington**

Joseph Bevilacqua provided an update on his recent Washington trip during which he was invited to a meeting at the White House with the White House Counsel on Economic Development. During that meeting there was discussion on a major initiative the president is pushing through the recently passed WIOA legislation that replaces WIA. That initiative is apprenticeships where a person is brought in and allowed to show his skills at a worksite and also provided with classroom training for a job.

Joe said that the administration is placing great emphasis on apprenticeship results and will be putting a substantial amount of grant money into apprenticeship programs. Joe reported that John Ladd, Director of Apprenticeships for the administration, spoke on this initiative. There were staff people representing both democrats and republicans who wrote the law and advised those present not to spend time analyzing what the differences are between WIA and WIOA and complaining but rather to look at what's new and allows us to do different things moving forward. Joe also said that WIOA recognizes that the employer is key and the driver of the workforce system.

Joe also said that the US Department of Commerce has added a workforce development component and now commerce and education are working together. The new synergy between agencies leads to great hope for apprenticeships. USDOL cannot just provide training but there must be a need for a job and aligned with a job. Joe also said that board chairs must continue to be from private industry and the new law had reduced the number of mandatory seats. The law is focused on workforce issues and giving us the tools to do the job. They want employers to know what they need to create tiered employment opportunities. The goal is to bring people in and then bring them up.

Joe also spoke about a tour of Ford Motor Company and a family owned machine shop much like Mike Munday's business, who both said that they have jobs but encounter problems hiring people who do not have soft skills.

Rafael said that the devil is in the details and he is glad that WIOA was finally passed as it has been long overdue. He noted that the current administration originally thought that everyone should go to college but that it is now advocating apprenticeships. A mix of the two is more reasonable.

Joe said that the president instructed Vice President Biden to do a study on workforce issues. Consequently, they recognize that not everyone is geared for college and that vocational schools, apprenticeships and entrepreneurs are avenues for good employment opportunities. Rafael said there is a lot of good intent but that funding is short. Long term apprenticeship are expensive and so far there is little extra funding to execute them.

Peter Matthews asked if an apprenticeship is just an OJT. Chili said that the problem with apprenticeships is that the state doesn't have good guidance on what it is. Procedures need to be in place as everyone wants to do it with employers but it is currently easier to do OJTs.

Chili said that in our budget there is 10% allocated for apprenticeships and 40% for OJTs or ITAs. He referenced 2 union apprenticeship programs that took place in Hopkington he just learned about. We may not know where they are doing

apprenticeship programs. Mike Munday said that OJT all takes place on site but apprenticeships can include outside training. Joe said that he feels that John Ladd, who is originally from Massachusetts, will make sure it is implemented in Massachusetts.

Chili said that none of his peers are looking at the past and want to make the best of the new 5 year legislation. He said that he hopes that the funding comes with the legislation to support it. He also commented that there are no middle range jobs but that for the first time in months the numbers of jobs for manufacturing and construction have picked up.

Joe said that with the better alignment of federal agencies and with the economy looking better, the country is trending in the right direction.

Rafael said that there is now more flexibility in getting people into training and the important question may become how to choose a good mix of people for training. How are we to determine who gets trained? Before we offered training to those who couldn't get a job. Now it looks as if we could train people who could get the type of jobs they had without training.

Chili said that WIA was not a work first program and the new regulations are more geared to serve at risk populations and target groups that need training. Rafael said that employers want employees they can rely on and to make the norm the hardest to serve won't help U.S. businesses become globally competitive. Joe said that the key regulations are being written right now and the expectation is getting people who can do the job.

Rafael said that the legislation gives greater importance to governors who will be recertifying boards every two years. The governor's staff at the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, specifically the Division of Career Services, will be doing the recertification. Their funding has gone up to 15% and he feels that regions may become less significant under WIOA.

Joe said that they need a plan on how to get where we need to be. The state and region need to identify where the jobs are in the future. He said that the apprenticeships will definitely be funded. Rafael said that he could be wrong but he feels that federal and state bureaucracies will become more important under the new WIOA and private employers may have less of a voice. He wonders how courses connected to employer desired training and employer guaranteed jobs will fare if the emphasis becomes targeted trainee groups who are generally hard to serve.

Joe said that regionalism will play a part going forward as will strategic partnerships with employers and colleges. He said that the local workforce associations will have meetings around this new act. The state board will have a discussion also as we are all

in this together. We are a regional entity and aware of the fact that we have a regional economy.

III. Review and Discussion of Motion to Approve Sharing Career Center Member Information with Public Higher Education Institutions

Executive Director Rafael Abislaiman said that at the last quarterly board meeting Mayor Rivera expressed a strong interest in providing ValleyWorks Career Center clients information on Northern Essex Community College opportunities. Things have developed to a point where we think we have a legal and beneficial agreement toward that end. At the career center seminar at the start of unemployment newly unemployed people clients will be made aware of opportunities for Pell and Perkins funded education and job training. Rafael said that often people look for a job right away or opt for a UI paid vacation. Only a handful go into UI wanting a job right away and fewer have qualified for immediate training. Non-Department of Labor funding may provide people with ways to more quickly prepare for a new career. It will provide individuals with information on how to access a lot more training money separate from the relatively small amounts of WIA money we currently provide. An informational form customers could sign or not sign is being resisted by the State Division of Career Services. They do not share our view and see what we're doing as moving toward one preferred vendor. Joe suggested providing a fact sheet on all educational opportunities. Rafael said that public schools are cheaper. He said that private colleges are expensive and with personal debt for education now exceeding credit card debt, he doesn't feel that it the best interest of clients to treat private sector colleges the same as public ones.

Rafael said that we have two public higher education entities in our region; NECC and UMass in Haverhill and that, under our plan, both would be provided with info. The goal of the mayor is to raise income for residents of Lawrence and he knows that people with just some college earn more than those with no college.

Joe asked if this was for Lawrence residents only and Rafael that we cannot discriminate and will ask everyone attending a career center seminar whether they want to receive more information on the courses provided at area public college. Joe wondered is someone doesn't have a GED what would happened. Chili said that the college may accept them and put them in a GED program. Rafael also noted that currently our college credential programs are mostly at NECC because of affordability. He also said that the last four U.S. Presidents encouraged participation at community colleges and that Congress has spent hundreds of millions of dollars encouraging Department of Labor entities like ours to work with community colleges.

Joe wondered if there's any harm in providing career center customers with a list of all area colleges and let them choose who they want to contact. Ralph said that the mayor wants a closer association with public colleges and that he agrees. Peter Matthews

suggested that we may want to provide information on the public colleges on the outskirts of our region but not private ones. Rafael said that we may be able to provide customers with a list of other public colleges but that we also have a responsibility to our CEO to provide customer information to NECC and UMass in Haverhill. There is nothing improper about it because minimal WIA money is involved and is also in keeping with Federal desires and trends. Joe said that Peter's suggestion is right because by including those on the periphery of our region the state cannot say we are recommending one source.

Rafael said that they could add a sentence to the motion to include other public colleges. He said that WIA funded counseling on WIA funded training options is provided much later in the process and that all vendors on the state authorized vendor list are eligible to receive WIA funded training dollars in keeping with customer choice. WIA is a small funding stream through which we pay our training vendors and we are informing clients of other non-WIA training options early in the UI process and not counseling them to choose them. Joe said that now we are all lifelong learners and we need to provide training and educational information including on technical high school programs which are great. NECC already has partnerships with both technical schools. Peter Matthews then asked for a motion as amended.

Motion by Mike Munday, seconded by Ron Contrado, to potentially increase and supplement VWCC customer training opportunities with MA Higher Education and Federal Pell and Perkins Grants, the MVWIB agrees to share new career center member information with this region's public higher education institutions when authorized to do so by individual customers. We will also provide clients information on other public higher education institutions abutting our region. Motion passed.

Under Other Business, Chili mentioned that they had the 3rd Annual Job Fair at the Spinners in partnership with the Lowell WIB. It was very successful and they grossed \$20,000. Joe then said the new law places a greater emphasis on returning veterans. Chili said that ValleyWorks will be having a job fair for veterans at NECC in November and asked if Joe would send out the notice in his Chamber flyer. Joe said that he would as he always includes whatever Chili asks him to put in his flyer.

IV. Adjourn

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell,

Recorder