



**PLANNING/CAREER CENTER COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes**

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

8:00 a.m.

439 South Union Street

Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Ron Contrado, Andrew Herlihy, Bob Wescott

Members Absent: Juan Yepez, Chairman
Rosalin Acosta, Mike Munday, Abel Vargas

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono, Mary Kivell

Others: None

I. Approval of Minutes of December 20, 2016

In the absence of Planning Chair, Juan Yepez, who is out of the country on business, Bob Wescott, MVWIB Treasurer and planning committee member, chaired the meeting. A quorum being present, Mr. Wescott called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. and then called for a motion on the minutes of the December 20, 2016 meeting.

Motion by Andrew Herlihy, seconded by Ron Contrado, to approve the minutes of the December 20, 2016 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

II. Performance Summary as of December 20, 2016

Rafael Abislaiman said that we are ahead of scheduled performance in most categories, except for program exiters. Rafael also said that we are slightly behind in entered employments but those two categories will catch up later in the FY. Bob Wescott asked about the number of job seekers served and Rafael said that we are slightly ahead of plan. He's noticed that there has been a lot of activity at the career center lately. He said that UI is low and perhaps folks who were not job searching are starting to look again. But it's possible that UI has dropped because some baby boomers are aging out of the job market and not looking for work.

Ron Contrado agreed that as the economy gets better more people who dropped out of looking for work are now getting back to looking. Susan said that the increase in the career center activity is from the Polartec workers, which it also affecting the dislocated worker numbers. Rafael said that there has been activity in companies moving or closing shop. Some are medical companies. Susan mentioned that Flo Serve is closing. Rafael said that when companies leave we get busy especially when companies go overseas and we receive NEG funding. Rafael said that since the State has incurred significant cuts they may keep more of the NEG training dollars.

Bob Wescott said that the WIOA Youth category does not have a big number. Rafael said that Amy has replaced a counselor and is running with one counselor but now their numbers are going up and a replacement counselor has been hired and will raise numbers further. Rafael also said that it will help that WIOA has extended the youth category to age twenty-four.

Members discussed how our move downtown may impact customer numbers. Some people speculate that it may impact customer flow negatively. Rafael said that we are in a great location across from the Common in a nice part of the city with nice restaurants in the area. The move is scheduled to start on January 26th and we will be open for business on February 1st. Susan opined that we may have a different customer flow.

III. Budget Update as of December 31, 2016

Bob Wescott said that he supposes the budget numbers are skewed with the set aside for the move and Rafael agreed. He said that those costs are part of the significant accrual put aside. Bob asked if any of the expenses have been paid and Rafael said not as yet. The next budget period will reflect more of those expenses. Rafael also commented on the training and group training numbers stating that the majority of clients don't receive training. He said that they receive resume assistance, job counseling, and labor market information to assist them in their job search. WIOA allows the state to keep 15% of the DOL allocation. We supplement our funding with regional layoff funding or other grants. Rafael said that we advise the state on employers in our region who apply for a Workforce Training Fund (WTF) grant and also occasionally help employers apply for Commonwealth Corporation grants.

Susan said that we are applying for a COMCORP ex-offender grant that is due Wednesday. There is a lot of interest in the RFP but COMCORP has received less funding so only two awards will be made in the entire state. Rafael said that a good example of a successful Commonwealth Corporation funded program is Equipment Operator training activity at the Longshoremens training center. It is an excellent program that Susan designed and in which Matthias has been doing an excellent job recruiting trainees and overseeing operations.

Ron Contrado wondered if we can extend our assistance to smaller companies as some small companies don't have the capacity to write grants but could benefit from them. Rafael said that perhaps we could help them create a consortium and write a proposal for them. We have many employer partners, particularly in manufacturing. Rafael also talked about the state Demand 2.0 program which tries to coordinate large employer contact centrally at the state. The state has a hotline for companies, and a website with information for employers. He cited an example in Southeast Massachusetts where three WIBs met with Google. Google plans to add up to three hundred employees in SE MA.

IV. Career Center Report

Career Center Director Amy Weatherbee was unable to attend today's meeting as she had another commitment. Rafael said that she is very busy with the move and the OSCC RFP. He said that he has extended the RFP to address State concerns on our indemnification clause. He sent out the extension yesterday and it again requires a letter of intent.

He noted that the South East WIB region gave a two week turnaround but the State insisted that it be increased to four weeks. That WIB has gone through four directors since Rafael has been here and he recently met the new director, Dean Rizzo. Andrew Herlihy knows Dean who is a capable guy.

Rafael said that the extension is for up to four weeks and the indemnification is out. He also said that we couldn't mention space requirements but included a strong preference for matching funds if a vendor plans to move the career center to a new site.

V. Report on 255 Essex Street

Rafael said that the Mayor has been pushing very hard for a February 1st move. We will make it work but have run into some hot water with the IT wiring as we used an RFQ (3 bids) none of which came in at below \$50K. We were informed that IT wiring is considered construction and we are required to use a RFP and not a RFQ if bids are \$50K or greater. We had to cancel the work and the city has an existing vendor that is starting today (Gone Green). The prior vendor was Lan Tel and the delay cost us a week. We also have to work with another electrical company (Sanibel) to bring electricity to copiers and printers. Rita Brousseau, Lawrence Purchasing Agent, has helped by adding work to existing City contracts. Andy Herlihy said the issue is the prevailing wage. It applies to transport and assembly.

Rafael said that room work that we wanted will not be done because new fire codes mandate that walls go only 2/3 up to the ceiling with our existing sprinkler heads. In consequence, Matthias, Brian and Cristy will be in cubicles or partitioned spaces.

Rafael then asked Ron Contrado if he would be willing serve on the Career Center RFP Review Committee and he agreed. He then said that he is looking for another one or two private sector board members. It was agreed to send out the latest board membership list to the board.

Andrew Herlihy reported that Haverhill has submitted a proposal for a Workforce Skills Grant for the high school to bring robotics to the school for student instruction/training.

Andy mentioned that there is a new County Sheriff. Rafael said that Susan has reached out to them and established a relationship with Probation as part of the CommCorp proposal we're submitting. Bob Wescott mentioned the opioid crisis and whether folks could get help before they become incarcerated. Susan mentioned that 56% of ex-offenders are more likely to overdose upon release.

There was discussion on the problem and on the folks who are knowledgeable about the issue. Susan said that her grant is for job training and we need to work to see how to interface with the Sheriff's department. Andy said that they have their own workforce system with job training and job placement and we could build on that. Rafael said that the male recidivism rate at the Farm is 70% but at the women's facility it is 30%.

Bob said that he would talk to an opioid expert in Methuen and check whether we can help as part of job development. Andy also mentioned that the CORI system needs attention as it is often a barrier to employment.

VII. Other Business

There was no other business.

VIII. Adjourn

Having no further business Andrew Herlihy made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Bob Westcott, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell,

Recorder