



PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Friday, June 12, 2009

8:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board

Lawrence, MA 01840

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Robert LeBlanc, Shirley Callan,
Michael Sweeney

Members Absent: Pedro Arce, Sal Lupoli, Charles LoPiano, Karen
Sawyer, Mike Lynch

Staff Present: Fred Carberry, Betty Kirk, Deborah Andrews

Guests Present: Barbara Zeimetz, Amy Weatherbee

1. Approval of Minutes of 5/20/09

Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. and called for a motion to approve the minutes of the 5/20/09 meeting.

Motion by Shirley Callan seconded by Mike Sweeney to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2009 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

2. Recommendations for Funding Summer Work & Learning RFPs

Fred Carberry said that Deborah Andrews, Youth Workforce Program Manager would report on the Summer Work & Learning RFPs.

Deborah Andrews, MVWIB Youth Program Manager, said that the Youth Council had met and recommended approval of the staff recommendations for funding the Summer Work & Learning proposals. Deborah said she would go over the programs recommended for funding and if anyone had any questions on the proposals that were not recommended to feel free to discuss them.

Robert LeBlanc recused himself from discussion and the vote on the Summer Work and Learning RFPs as he is a member of the board of one of the bidders. All committee members signed conflict of interest forms.

The first proposal was from the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Lawrence for a Counselors in Training program. Requested slots are 14. This program is recommended for funding contingent upon successful budget negotiation and reduction. The use of Work Based Learning Plan and teaching work readiness is clear. Not clear is the training to be provided for being a 'counselor.' There are concerns that staff are also the counselors for other children and should not be fully funded with ARRA grant. The staff recommended funding the program if we receive clearer information on counseling training available and a significantly reduced budget with a reduction in staff being charged.

The next proposal is from Lawrence Public Schools for Transitions to High School for Grade 8 At-Risk Students. Requested slots are 90 for a total funding of \$3,200. This program has an academic component geared to tutoring and small groups for reading and math skills, a life skills component through an Upward Bound type course, "Project Adventure." The staff recommended funding the program but will need more information on field trips to job sites, colleges, and on the scheduling of the program.

Peter Matthews said that he didn't understand this proposal. Deborah said that this program uses the stipend as a carrot to encourage youth to come in the summer. It includes career development and work readiness. Amy Weatherbee said that there is also an academic component and that this program is for youth at risk of dropping out.

Mike Sweeney said that this is a way to engage 90 youth who qualify for the money, dovetailing on funding to the LPS.

Fred Carberry said that in meeting with LHS Principal Sharkey they talked of this program as a way to keep at risk youth engaged at a critical crossroads.

Amy said that the only concern is if there are any 8th graders who are not 14 as required by the funding source.

Community Action, Inc. submitted a proposal titled People of Destiny in Haverhill, MA. This program has a very comprehensive design with 40 slots. It is a 30 hour a week program for seven weeks. The occupational areas include CPR/First Aid training and certification and Volunteer Substitute Teacher (VAST) training which is unique. CAI has experience both in academic and occupational skills areas. The staff is recommending funding this program with budget review.

Community Action, Inc. also submitted another proposal for People of Destiny for the Newburyport and seacoast area for 10 slots. This is the same as the Haverhill program and we were please to see this being offered in this region. Staff recommends funding this program with budget review.

Hoops for Hope submitted a proposal titled Hoops for Hope Youth Sports Coach, Referee, and Facilitator Program for multiple sites. The request is for 30 slots. Although the program has a strong history of providing summer services to youth in our area it was weak in terms of provision of information on the components and actual design. There were also concerns about three sites and rotating youth through different sports. The staff did recommend funding, contingent on the following: reduce to only Basketball, reduce staffing accordingly, and provide stronger information on the curriculum and a more comprehensive schedule with clear goals related to the WBLP and potential certification.

Peter Matthews said that he would like to see if there is an opportunity to get follow-up information if any of the kids get certification, even if it is only 11 out of 30.

The American Training, Inc. proposal is called StarWorks and targets people with disabilities. It is 26 hours per week and has a mix of Basic Education Enhancements, occupational skills exploration and employability skills. The WBLP is integrated in the leadership development and employability skills component in a comprehensive way. American Training, Inc. has experience both in academic and occupational skills areas, and has experience with disadvantaged youth. Deborah said that this was the highest rated proposal. The staff recommends funding this program.

The final proposal for consideration is the Greater Lawrence Community Boarding Empowerment Academy for 20 slots. The Empowerment Academy ties academic/college preparatory skills with projects and work experience. There is 24 hours of paid (stipend and work) time but an additional 8 hours a week (2 per day) geared to recreation and lunch break in partnership with Project Bread for the lunch. The management plan and staffing need clarification. The staff recommended this program but there were outstanding pieces of information not provided to the fiscal department.

Amy Weatherbee said that she is having difficulty getting information. Discussion followed on the fact that the Youth Council recommended giving them written notice and a deadline.

Mike Sweeney said that, as he sees it some issues need to be worked out but, they have not been given a specific date. He said that we should allow a reasonable amount of time after formal notification. Amy said that a written request would be sent out by noon today and it was agreed that the close of business on Wednesday, June 17th be the deadline. Mike said that the overriding concern, besides the kids, is that all programs be of the highest quality so we can report back to the state favorably.

Peter Matthews asked what the kids would be doing. Deborah said that 20 kids would be inventorying everything on site, doing some maintenance, and 8 hours per week of academics.

Shirley Callan stressed the need for strong academic components for youth.

Motion by Mike Sweeney to approve the funding recommendations of the Youth Council for the Summer Work & Learning Proposals as discussed subject to contract negotiations. Motion seconded by Shirley Callan. Motion passed with Bob LeBlanc abstaining.

Deborah then reported that 185 youth would be served through these programs. We have 600 summer jobs throughout the Merrimack Valley. We have 279 applications from Lawrence with 215 qualified; 97 from Haverhill with 80 qualified; 214 applications from Methuen with 174 qualified. Deborah said that the Youth Council has requested a weekly update and that she would be happy to provide it to the Planning Committee.

Fred Carberry said that Arthur Chilingirian asked him to bring up the fact that some worksites for summer youth include evenings until 11:00 pm and weekends. The Youth Counselors work the regular ValleyWorks day shift and are not available at those times.

Mike Sweeney asked how many and Barbara Zeimetz asked if there are child labor law issues.

Fred said that some of the youth are up to age 24 and the child labor laws would not apply. The number affected has not been determined but the issue has come up when the Business Service Reps are meeting with private industry.

Discussion followed on the possibility of having counselors on call or hiring additional counselors for those times if needed.

Motion by Shirley Callan seconded by Mike Sweeney that 14-17 year old youth work typical first shift hours and that Summer Youth Counselors be given the flexibility in coverage for nights and weekends for 18-24 year olds. Mike Sweeney seconded the motion and motion passed.

3. Update on ARRA Strategies & Green Advisory Council Update

Fred Carberry said that the plan was submitted on time and part of the plan addresses transparency. The MVWIB will add a tab to its website for ARRA; an agenda item for ARRA on all Planning Committee and Quarterly Board meetings; MVWIB will convene focus groups of employers and providers with the first on

June 18th; the MVWIB will create an e-newsletter; and an executive summary of the plan on the website.

Fred said that we have placed a public notice in the newspaper inviting public comments from June 15th through July 15th.

Bob LeBlanc asked if the people he is concerned with are being considered and Amy said that DOL has refused to waive the eligibility requirements.

Fred Carberry said that WIA Reauthorization will be debated soon and is an opportunity to weigh in on the regulations and statutory requirements. This may affect some change.

Amy said that in July state areas will meet to try to push the authorization up. Fred said that the state WIB is compiling all suggestions and changes. Fred said that something in writing would be helpful.

Fred then apologized for having to leave.

Betty Kirk said that we will have an RFP issued for September for group training. She said that she sent out 1,000 employer surveys and received 61 returns, 41 who said they plan to be hiring in the next couple of months. Betty said that we have twelve employers confirmed to attend an Employer Focus Group on June 18th.

Fred Carberry has been working with the Chamber and will be issuing a letter of invitation for the Green Advisory Council. They will meet in late July before the RFP is issued. We will be meeting with training vendors prior to the release of the RFP to provide technical assistance and employer input.

Betty said that the survey returns highlighted the lack of basic skills and the importance of combining ABE/ESOL with occupational skills.

Mike Sweeney asked for an executive summary of the surveys at Betty's convenience.

4. ABE/ESOL Advisory Council

Mike Sweeney said that there was some confusion on his part, as he was not at the last meeting, as to what the standing was on the ABE/ESOL Advisory Council and wondered if we had reacted to a concern by adding another layer of bureaucracy. We have an appropriate representative of this group on this committee.

Shirley Callan said that the providers were upset with the inability to get a meeting with the WIB staff.

Barbara Zeimetz said that DOE encouraged ABE/ESOL providers to connect with their local WIBs since they are not getting any ARRA funds and to advocate for their programs. Barbara said that she had attended both meetings and what was discussed is that when developing the RFPs that include education, it is important that they partner. Stand alone education is not an option through ARRA. Barbara said that the opportunity was created to meet in terms of discussion when the RFP. They would have opportunities to meet on the elements of the RFP. There was no formal decision to make another group. She said that the confusion came from the notes of the meeting circulated by one of the providers.

Mike Sweeney said that we have an ABE/ESOL representative and he doesn't see the need to change. He also noted as far as he can see that we did not formally create this advisory council.

5. Other Business

Betty Kirk said that we have officially been awarded the Ex-Offenders Grant in the amount of \$50,000 with a starting date of October 1st.

Bob LeBlanc asked for a copy of the grant proposal and Betty said that she would provide it.

6. Adjourn

Having no further business Bob LeBlanc made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Mike Sweeney. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Recorder