



**Salvatore's
Caesar Room
354 Merrimack Street
Lawrence, MA 01843**

ANNUAL MEETING

**Minutes
Tuesday, October 24, 2017
7:30 AM**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joseph Bevilacqua, Francisco Brea, Eileen Burns, Ron Contrado, Evelyn Friedman, Dr. Lane Glenn, Andrew Herlihy, Supt. Maureen Lynch, Joselyn Marte, Peter Matthews, Carol Riemer, Karen Sawyer-Conard, Bob Westcott, Cal Williams, Juan Yopez

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Edward Bartkiewicz, Christian Brennan, Beverly Donovan, Rosa Muñoz, Michael Fiato, Jeff Linehan, Michael Munday, Ann Ormond, Marianne Paley-Nadel, Steve Salvo, Fred Shaheen, Michael Strem, Kathryn Sweeney, Stanley Usovicz, Abel Vargas, Ellen Weinhold

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dawn Beati, LouAnne Cloyd, Chuck Masaitas, George Moriarty, Eric Nelson, Lisa Remington, Sandy Rothen, Linda Rohrer

STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono, Matthias Bohler, Corina Ruiz

1. Call to Order

A quorum being present, Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:50 a.m.

2. Welcome & Introductions

Peter Matthews asked Linda Rohrer, VWCC Director to introduce herself. Linda said she's been onboard since August. Previous to joining NECC VWCC, she was the Executive Director of the Metro North region for almost 10 years. She started at the City of Lowell, recruiting participants, employment counseling, writing grants and as the administrator of dislocated worker programs. Linda said she's very happy to be here.

Peter added that the VWCC won the bronze award for Veteran services and Linda said that they are proud and honored.

3. Approval of Minutes of June 27, 2017

Chairman Matthews asked for a motion on the minutes of the June 27, 2017 board meeting.

Motion by Joe Bevilacqua to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2017 meeting as submitted. Francisco Brea seconded the motion and motion passed unanimously.

4. Report of Chair

Peter Matthews said that the Board Committee Chair report would be short in order to provide Assistant Secretary Zavoronkova plenty of time for her presentation, to field board questions, and for board discussion.

Peter briefly stated that the contract with NECC is in its final draft and will soon be signed. As stated in their proposal, NECC hopes to continue what's been good at ValleyWorks while improving on a few things to make it even better. Our contract with them includes those improvements while also dealing with national cuts.

Our first year planned performance numbers are in the contract and are already into the State. As usual, we took last year's numbers and added to them a bit. But those planned outcome numbers are lower than those proposed by NECC in their proposal. Although the outcomes are roughly the same as last year's, and though NECC will receive about the \$2.5 million budget outlined in our RFP, there's currently 24% less money overall. So our contract with NECC is premised on doing more with less.

This year, the bulk of the participants to be individually served are carry-in and most of the people being carried-in worked at Polartec. Typically dislocated worker carry-ins are from the previous year but there may be a few from other earlier years as well. This year, the number is especially large because of dislocated Polartec workers long training periods. Planning Committee Chair Juan Yopez will further explain this.

The Federal grant to provide services to former Polartec employees represents a little over 10% of the total FY 2018 budget. Without it we would have to lay off six or seven staff members. Juan will speak more on this.

Our contract with NECC contains the innovative changes they outlined in their proposal. They include having a more welcoming wait area, more thorough customer and staff assessments to help build on strengths, having career center staff work in industry sector teams – both BSRs and employment advisors – rather than in geographic teams. VWCC will use a business sector driven approach to help facilitate, where possible, the college's proposed work now/train later strategy. This is in keeping with new Federal, Commonwealth and MVWIB interest in apprenticeship training. WIOA also provides the flexibility to use up to 20% of our annual funds on incumbent workers. Our 2 primary foci will continue to be manufacturing and healthcare, but Linda is working on creating 1 or 2 other industry teams.

Linda and the College are also figuring out the best assessment tools that most clearly show where customers stands when they walk in. A new and easier to use career center website will help folks learn what they can do to find jobs and better navigate complex State and Federal systems.

Unless there are questions, that concludes my presentation.

Peter then introduced Assistant Secretary. Marina is Assistant Secretary for Program and Performance Management at the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. Amongst many other things, she leads their effort to rebrand Career Centers under one name or slogan to raise public and business familiarity and clarity on their services. She also leads the Commonwealth's new 'Regionalization' initiative, data from which she'll be presenting to us today.

The Assistant Secretary is a graduate of NYU and Harvard University, has worked with youth on their foundational and debating skills both in New York City and Denver; and was a Dukakis Fellow in Governor Baker's office just before taking on her new and very multi-faceted role. Marina has in essence successfully created a new and very important job that is already serving Massachusetts residents. So without further ado, I present Assistant Secretary Zavoronkova.

5. Special Presentation: Marina Zhavoronkova, Assistant Secretary for Program and Performance Management, Exec. Office of Labor & Workforce Development

Marina said she was representing Secretary Acosta and was going to talk about regionalization. She talked about the goals and objectives and explained that there are 7 regions that are roll-ups of the 16 Workforce Development Boards. The larger regions do not replace the existing 16 regions. The northeast region consists of the Merrimack Valley WIB, North Shore WIB and Greater Lowell WIB. One of the uniqueness of this collaboration is that besides workforce boards, it also includes the Workforce Skills Cabinet partners comprised of Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development and Executive Office of Education and the Regional Planning Team comprised of Workforce, Economic Development and Education.

To view the entire presentation, click here [Northeast Regional Planning Update](#).

During Marina's presentation there were several questions and comments.

NECC President, Lane Glenn, made a comment about regional trends. He pointed out a couple of important things about the significant influx of foreign born residents in the state and into the region, from a policy perspective, many of the folks coming in to Massachusetts have education credentials from other countries. Historically it has been challenging for them to get those validated in Massachusetts. NECC is taking a step in that direction by partnering with the Center for Educational Documentation, which correlates foreign degrees with US ones. Lane added that this step is something this group may want to consider. We have a lot of folks working below their degrees and much of this has to do with how undocumented people are processed in the state when it comes to education. Lane concluded by saying many will hear him often advocate for this.

Rafael said that health and human services are driven by public purse. Many of the manufacturing companies make defense related things and pay taxes. Educational services are run by largely public sector employees who receive those taxes. In our area it is important to realize that controversies in Washington have a direct impact here.

President Glenn said that another important conversation across the board is manufacturing. The projection is that manufacturing will be declining in the next five years. This region has one of the strongest manufacturing basis in the entire State. We should not turn labor away from manufacturing. But we should be careful how we move forward capitalizing manufacturing programs, equipment and facilities. The earlier slide pointed out that the number of overall facilities is declining and the overall number of jobs has been declining. Now that we see that manufacturing employing number are set to decline in the next five years, we may want to adjust our training programs. We need to look for ways to partner and maximize resources.

Marina said that manufacturing, in terms of the current conversation, it's pretty tricky. We don't want to make it difficult to grow manufacturing and a lot of manufacturers require people to fill positions and expand. It is difficult to track what the future demand and supply will be. Rafael added that the pace of change makes prediction more and more difficult.

Juan used teacher assistants as an example of rapid change. In the past, they may have worked in many other fields and in the futures they may work in still others. Marina agreed.

Cal Williams asked who the lead City is in regionalization. Marina said there's no lead City or region.

Bob said that data cannot capture unexpected change. For example older people may lose jobs because they can't as productively work with computers.

Chairman Matthews asked President Glenn on the status of the police academy that was set to be built in Lawrence. President Glenn said that NECC received funding to conduct a study to take down the current Lawrence police station and build a new police station and training facility. The study produced the recommendation to build a facility and that's where it stands right now. President Glenn along with the Mayor, continue to pursue funding to make this happen.

6. Reports of Committee Chairs

Peter called on Juan Yopez to give the Planning Committee report.

- ***Planning Committee***

Juan said this past quarter was challenging. We dealt with many difficult financial issues. But I am happy to report that most of them have been successfully resolved.

The MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development's Department of Career Services, informed us that we were on track to receive a \$300k grant to help recently unemployed workers from area small companies. But because of Hurricane Irma, those funds were redirected to Texas. Separately, we were owed another \$300K in funds under a Multiple Employer National Employer Grant (NEG). Most distressing, until very recently it looked less and less likely that we would receive any support to help Polartec employees, though over a million dollars in Polartec funding was approved by the Commonwealth and verbally by the Feds months ago.

Polartec customer service at ValleyWorks has been ongoing for well over a year. 229 enrolled are currently enrolled at the Career Center and 180 former Polartec employees are in training. The company was also trade certified. Trade certification occurs when the Feds considers that company

lay-offs are due to cheaper foreign competition. Most employees of trade certified companies will be in training for a long time.

To date, only about 29 former Polartec employees have gotten jobs. They are making an average wage of \$17/hr but they made much more at Polartec. It's thought that more training will raise their salaries to closer to what they earned before. If we didn't receive Polartec funding, layoffs were almost assured at the WIB and Career Center. Our efforts with others was also constricted. I am now happy to report that we received a \$1.3 million Federal Polartec contract this past Thursday. It may take several months before those funds are in hand, but we appear to be out of the woods, especially since a couple of weeks earlier we also received notice that we will receive over \$300K in Multiple Employer NEG funds that had been in arrears. So all told, just this past month are cash flow improved by about \$1.6 million.

We are also happy to report a new \$300K contract with the EPA to conduct truck driver and heavy equipment operator training. We will train and support unemployed and underemployed workers to be CDL drivers. Participants will also receive the hazmat and liquid waste tanker 'endorsements'. MVWIB separately received a \$330K in CommCorp WCTF funding to train ex-offenders to become construction laborers. All of these non-WIOA formula grants do not make up for an even larger cut in WIOA funding because of this regions low unemployment rate. But the non-formula grants have allowed us to avoid lay-offs and to build a framework of new initiatives.

Our efforts were recently recognized at a State BizWorks Conference. Workforce development representatives from 40 states and four territories attended that event. MVWIB received terrific Union endorsements from AFL-CIO and Teamsters leaders. They are our partners on our CDL program that was originally funded by CommCorp and that will now be funded by EPA. Susan Almono and Matthias Bohler have sometimes needed to be very patient while working with union staff who are by nature unbureaucratic – they don't like paperwork or lots of process. We were praised by them but it hasn't been easy. This situation reminds us that we must all be willing to thoughtfully innovate to lower costs and for the benefit of our clients.

It should be noted that many of our programs attempt to deal with the new low workforce participation rate. Although the unemployment rate is low, a lower percentage of Americans work now than did ten years ago. An increasing number of people are not engaged in the workforce. They are not dislocated workers but instead classify as WIOA Title I Adults. They are people who have never worked or haven't worked in a long time. When you couple them with high disconnected youth numbers, one sees that special efforts are required.

Apart from those mentioned earlier, MVWIB recently applied for a program for called 'Learn and Earn' grant to help adults who are underemployed or on public assistance get trained for a job that makes more than minimum wage. Our concept is to work with Head Start in Lawrence and Haverhill, probably single mothers, to get into basic IT positions.

Unless there are questions, that concludes my presentation.

- *Youth Committee*

Youth Council Chair Cal Williams said we truly had terrific youth jobs activities this summer. We spent most of our efforts educating our local youth on Work Readiness skills and they received many types of meaningful work experiences.

Our community partners encouraged the youth they serve to apply to Youthworks and interacted with them until they did so. Many of their youth successfully applied and succeeded at the program. Summer staffing was expanded to support the program and, this year, we also relied on external space to present the Signal Success workshops. We want to thank the Lawrence High School, Lawrence Public Library, Silver Hill Charter School of Haverhill and the YMCA of Lawrence for those workshops. These partners did not charge any fees while allowing us to use their space.

A total of 246 youth were placed in subsidized jobs via three distinct programs. YouthWorks Summer funding provided 227 youth with jobs where they could get paid and learn about the world of work. The remaining 19 youth worked under either a MA Housing Authority Grant or under the Bridging the Opportunity Gap program under similar guidelines.

Via MVWIB, MassHousing provided subsidized employment opportunity for youth residing in area housing courts. We placed 11 of their youth in jobs while also partnering with Si Se Puede, Inc. - a local non-profit organization that provides educational, social and economic support to local low-income Lawrence youth and their families.

We job-placed 8 Bridging the Opportunity Gap youth into subsidized employment. Though with court records.

Overall, these youth performed very well and made a very positive impression on employers. CommCorp performed announced site visits at four job sites (two in Lawrence / two in Haverhill) and were very also pleased with what they observed.

Of the 246 total youth number, 235 successfully completed 15 hours of Signal Success training. That curriculum teaches leadership, health, safety, and necessary self-advocacy skills for youth to protect themselves and others in the workplace. In addition, participants explore career interest/goals. Supplementing Signaling Success, the Massachusetts Work Based Learning Plan (WBLP) was used to set and measure individual youths' attainment of their work readiness goals. Our region utilized the WBLP for all YouthWorks enrollees.

The MVWIB partnered with NESF Federal Credit Union to provide participants with banking and other finance related information. Youth bi-weekly earnings were direct deposited into those account.

A total of 61 employers participated in this year's program. In keeping with the Mayor's youth job initiative, scores of youth were separately employed by our employer partners. We will use those numbers as a match. Separately, a total of 7 youth obtained unsubsidized employment as a result of the employability skills attained.

Through the job readiness training, employment experience, and job coaching, employers like Dairy Queen, Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, Heavn'ly Donuts, Holy Family Hospital, Home Health Foundation, Mary Immaculate Health Care Services, Pentucket Medical, Presidential Gardens, Youth

Development Organization, and YMCA of Lawrence ultimately hired our youth after the program.

Our Connecting Activities funding was increased this year. Additional funds allowed us to add a half time staff to expand career preparation for college and better performance at high school. In particular, we're increasing employer involvement, supporting the development of Career Pathways, and maintaining higher levels of student participation. We are grateful to the Baker Administration and our state legislators for supporting Connecting Activities.

MVWIB also applied for YouthWorks year-round and we were one of only five of the sixteen regions to be awarded a grant. That is not yet public information until the Governor's office announces it. Our minutes will not be released till after the public announcement.

Unless members have questions, this concludes my presentation.

- ***Nominating Committee***

Peter said the election of officers will take place after the finance report since Ann Ormond is not present.

- ***Finance Report***

Treasurer Bob Westcott said that spending is on schedule. We will be making vacation and sick-day payouts to staff leaving City of Lawrence employment to become NECC employees.

7. Election of Officers

Rafael said Ann Ormond could not be present and also resigned as MVWIB Clerk and Nominating Committee Chair. Ann is no longer with the Newburyport Chamber and will be rejoining the WIB in the near future. He thanked her for her many efforts on behalf of the Merrimack Valley WIB.

Rafael then read the slate of officers. MVWIB Chair, Peter Matthews; MVWIB Vice Chair and Planning Committee Chair, Juan Yepez; Youth Committee Chair, Cal Williams; Treasurer, Robert Wescott; MVWIB Secretary/Clerk and Nominating Committee Chair, Karen Sawyer-Conard.

Peter asked for a motion.

Ron Contrado made a motion to approve the election of Peter Matthews, Chair; Juan Yepez, Vice Chair; Bob Westcott, Treasurer; and Karen Sawyer-Conard, Secretary/Clerk. Andrew Herlihy seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Sister Eileen asked if a list of the committees and their respective members can be sent via email and Rafael said yes.

8. Report of Executive Director

Rafael informed the board of his retirement at the end of the fiscal year or in July 2018. He thanked the board for all of their efforts during his tenure.

Rafael then said the VWCC Business Service Representatives (BSRs) will present on the services they provide.

Linda Rohrer explained that the following presentation will give a picture of what services are being provided currently and that VWCC is in the process of changing some things. She finished by saying she would like an opportunity with members to see how VWCC can better serve their needs.

Eric Nelson presented on behalf of the VWCC Business Service Unit. There are four BSRs: Chuck Masaitis, LouAnne Cloyd, Sandy Rochon and Eric Nelson.

Some of the direct services they provide are: job posting in Mass Job Quest, individual recruitments, job fairs, youth employment programs, employer information sessions and workforce development grant seminars. Eric mentioned the Mass BizWorks, which links all business services, programs and grant providers together.

VWCC consultation / referral services include but are not limited to: DIA Safety Grant, Workforce Training Fund Program, Work Opportunity Tax Credits, Mass Office of Business Development DUA WorkShare, Rapid Response – Layoff Aversion Assistance, Mass Small Business Development Center, Workforce Development Boards and Local Grants/Incentives.

To view the complete BSR presentation, click here [VWCC Business Service Representative](#).

Eric concluded by saying that the BSR unit would like to visit and inform our board members them of services are available to them.

9. Other Business

No other business.

10. Adjournment

Chairman Matthews thanked Rafael on his decision to retire. He added that Rafael has been unselfish and distributes information for the committee chairs and keeps them informed at all times.

Having no further business Francisco Brea made a motion to adjourn and Andrew Herlihy seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Corina Ruiz

Recorder