



NECC Riverwalk Location
360 Merrimack Street – Bldg. 9, Entrance K
3rd Floor, Room 312
Lawrence, MA 01843

QUARTERLY MEETING

Minutes
Tuesday, June 23, 2015
7:30 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Edward Bartkiewicz, Joseph Bevilacqua, Evelyn Friedman, Andrew Herlihy, Rosa Lopez, Joselyn Marte, Peter Matthews, Ann Ormond, Marianne Paley-Nadel, Carol Riemer, David Tibbetts, Bob Westcott, Cal Williams, Juan Yepes

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Rosalin Acosta, Francisco Brea, Ron Contrado, Rachel Concepcion, Brian DePena, Dennis DiZoglio, Atty. Wendy Estrella, Michael Fiato, Joseph Gangi, Jr., Dr. Lane Glenn, Susan Jepson, Supt. John Lavoie, Jeff Linehan, Michael Munday, Rosa Muñoz, Steve Salvo, John Sarro, Fred Shaheen, Jeff Sheehy, Michael Strem, Stanley Usovicz, Abel Vargas, Anita Worden

GUESTS PRESENT:

Arthur Chilingirian, Susan Kanoff, Luis Luna for Susan Jepson, Tracy Myszkowski, Linda Piergeorge for Mass Rehab, Jackie Romero United Way, MA Veteran's Services Secretary Francisco Ureña, Amy Weatherbee

STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono, Franklin Fernandez, Mary Kivell, Brian Norris, Corina Ruiz

1. Call to Order

A quorum being present, Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:40 a.m.

2. Approval of Minutes of April 28, 2015

Chairman Matthews asked for a motion on the minutes of the April 28, 2015 quarterly board meeting.

Motion by Cal Williams to approve the minutes of the April 28, 2015 meeting as submitted. Bob Westcott seconded the motion and motion passed unanimously.

3. Report of Chair

Chairman Peter Matthews reported that they had a great meeting this past Friday with the Governor who was very clear that there would be no changes right now to the WIBs. He also made it clear that we all need to perform. Several members of the MVWIB Executive Committee attended the meeting with Governor Baker and Secretary Walker. Most WIBs were represented so there were about fifty people present. The Governor and Secretary stated that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the law that's replacing WIA, is great because it provides the fifty States with greater flexibility for action. Several WIB members present asked the Governor if that flexibility included using existing Massachusetts WIBs. Peter said that he is glad to report that the Governor and Secretary unequivocally answered "yes."

Peter said that the Governor reasonably expects more energy and work to build useful innovation and economic opportunity for all. His goal is to bring all areas of Massachusetts up to the income levels enjoyed by most Greater Boston residents. The Governor plans to do that through education and workforce development. Both he and most U.S. governors believe that improving the American workforce is priority number one.

Peter continued stating that we know that WIA and now WIOA have much fewer resources than either the K to 12 or higher education systems. Massachusetts K-12 spends about \$250,000 per student over 13 years and we have a \$6,000 cap per customer job trained, normally in about five months. Peter said that if we increased the cap and training time, we'd serve fewer people.

Nationally, hundreds of thousands of post-secondary students receive Pell Grant funding for many years. Congressional Pell grant allocations are many times greater than what's allocated for WIA, or what is and will be allocated under WIOA. Peter said that WIOA is an excellent opportunity for us WIBs to set guidelines under which career center staff can be more responsive to different people as unemployment rates move up and down. It allows us to reset and work with employers whose companies grow while also providing more and not fewer workers with real opportunities for growth.

Institutional expectations are difficult to change once specific guidelines are set. If we had unlimited resources, correlating and prioritizing services to economic conditions would not matter. He said that because resources are limited, we believe that, under WIOA, we should try to always incorporate flexibility into how staff see the customers they serve. Workforce development services must be better correlated to both the labor market and to people. We want to help all low income people gain more opportunity. There are many different categories of low income people and those categories are much more diverse than a one-category label implies. Low-income people deserve better than cookie cutter categorization that doesn't recognize that some work very hard to get ahead.

Peter continued stating that the workforce development system can also do a better job meeting employer needs by realizing, as the MVWIB does, that when unemployment is high, effectiveness requires that we promote more training and services for unemployed people who require fewer services and training resources. Those low income adults and dislocated workers can more quickly go to work and begin to pay taxes. In essence, when there are a lot of unemployed people, resource allocations should be made to people who clearly indicate that

they will use limited resources well. When unemployment is low, effectiveness means that we provide more help to people who need lots of help to enter the workforce.

WIOA speaks of WIBs coordinating partner services seamlessly. But service coordination doesn't mean that our career center and WIB staff do everything for everyone. It doesn't mean that all WIOA partners do each other's jobs but instead that we can all be quickly and quantifiably responsive to each other's customer needs and reasonably reinforce each other's effectiveness and accountability.

Peter said that we should start by sharing timely information on what happens to customers referred to each other as partners. We should also recognize that we share many of the same customers and that we all have work to do in different roles in a 'seamless continuum of services'. WIB members should also much better articulate how Career Centers are pulled in at least two competing directions that the system always needs to balance – 1] helping people with multiple barriers get jobs and 2] helping employers get the most effective and productive employees.

Peter said that Governor Baker said that the system should be demand driven by both employers and workers. Job seekers want work that they can enjoy, an excellent wage, and a boss who will guide and mentor them. Employers want productive people who work hard no matter what, for relatively little money, and with minimal supervision. Peter said that as board members we probably need to help find the mean in both categories as unemployment and the economy move up and down.

As business people, educators and public service providers, we know that the needs of both unemployed and underemployed people and separately, of employers, vary in different situations at different times. Federal and State service guidelines should consequently be flexible enough to allow regions to prioritize and adjust to area economic conditions, labor employment rates, and unemployed/underemployed people's education and experience. Area employers have competing interests within their industry sector and industry sectors sometimes compete with each other for limited workforce development funds.

Our resource allocations may always result in more business people being unhappy than happy. We must always try to meet the needs of employers, disabled people and economically disadvantaged people through work with appropriate, specialized partners that most effectively use tax dollars and remember that there are broadly different opportunities for people with different disabilities and backgrounds. A person in a wheel chair can excel at office work and maybe in a factory but probably won't work in the trades. A person with learning disabilities may be an excellent laborer but probably unsuitable as a pharmacist. Intake and assessment should guide customers appropriately with minimum cost and maximum effectiveness.

Services to economically disadvantaged people will not suffer as much if we appropriately balance services to both LMI and reasonable expectations. In essence, in WIOA as under WIA, we should seek opportunity for all and an improved workforce using clear thinking and common sense.

4. Report of Treasure – Bob Westcott

Treasurer Bob Westcott said that he has been working on getting up to speed with the changes to WIOA and said that he has asked Fiscal Director Tracy Myszkowski to go over the budget for board members.

Tracy said that the total budget is \$7.8m with \$674,000 for the WIB with 7 FTEs, \$439,000 for DGA with 4 FTEs, \$1.7m for DCS with 19 FTE. There is \$2,200,000 for customer training and support as well as \$126,000 for GIC retiree costs. The budget reflects a 0% COLA for FY'16 with DCS staff getting a 2.25% COLA. Tracy said that the second page is a summary of salaries and fringe. She said the DCS has 2 open positions that have been posted and that there are 5 vacant positions at the Career Center with 1 posted.

The third sheet is a summary of changes. Tracy said that we received an 11% increase in WIOA youth. The Wagner Peyser funding doubled but Tracy said that 100% increase is going to be reduced before being finalized. Trade is down 70% and Summer Youth 4% but Tracy said that we are expecting new grants. One is a \$1.7m NEG for two years. A Health Care grant for \$250,000 and an EPA grant for \$192,000 in October.

The percent of FY'16 WIOA program allocation to customer training and support for Youth is 28%, for Adult 31% and for Dislocated Workers 31%. The dollar amount is \$215,240 for WIOA Youth, \$225,591 for WIOA Adult and \$227,430 for WIOA Dislocated Worker. Tracy also said that in addition to these funds, FY'15 training funds for Trade Eligible Customers paid by the state was \$772,447. DCS in Boston retains the funding to support Customer Training for Trade Customers.

Tracy then explained the staffing update and the reassignment of the IT staff to ½ time VWCC and ½ time WIB. She spoke about the vacant positions and targeted posting dates.

Bob Westcott made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Executive Committee to approve the FY'16 WIOA Budget as presented. Cal Williams seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Peter Matthews said that we are required to approve a budget but wanted board members aware that there may be changes due to additional funding and changes from the state but that the Planning Committee monitors the budget along with the new Treasurer.

6. Presentation – Francisco Ureña, Mass Dept. of Veterans Services Secretary

Chairman Matthews then moved to the next agenda item and asked Rafael to introduce our guest speaker. Rafael first asked those present to go around the room and introduce themselves. After introductions Rafael said that he had the honor of working with Secretary Ureña at the Exchange Club and said he is not afraid to work in any capacity. He has a Purple Heart Medal from when he deployed to Iraq as tank commander. In reading his biography, Rafael said that the Secretary worked as a security guard and earned his Associate Degree at Northern Essex Community College and is now doing his best for veterans as the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services. The Secretary works very hard.

The Secretary thanked Rafael and said that it is great to reminisce with people from this area. He said that he came from the Dominican Republic to Lawrence at age four and then at six moved to Florida. After his second enlistment in the Marines he moved back to Lawrence. He volunteered trying to engage youth in Lawrence and became the Veterans Officer for Lawrence. He said that he wanted to serve veterans and the community as a whole. He went to Boston as Veterans Officer under Mayors Menino and Walsh. Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito appointed him to be state Secretary of Veterans Services.

Secretary Ureña said that there are 364,000 veterans in the Commonwealth with 55% over the age of 55. There are only a few WWII veterans as they are mostly 89 – 90 years old, Korean War veterans are around 5 years younger and then Vietnam and Gulf War I Vets. He said that some folks thought there would be a wave who would retire after 9/11 but that hasn't been the case. He said that few remain after their first enlistment (10%). He also mentioned that service is voluntary and there are no more drafts. He also said that we still have men and women serving in harms' way and that lives are lost and injuries sustained every year.

The Secretary said that almost every Massachusetts City has a Veterans' Officer except for Western Mass districts and the hill towns and places that have challenges with transportation, job opportunities, and education. He said that one of his main goals is ending veteran's homelessness and engaging WIBs who offer training and job search information. There is a need for additional housing stock and many veterans need a transition period before they are ready to go out on their own due to mental health issues, substance abuse perhaps, or lack of a job. Today there are 1,200 homeless with some coming to Boston on a one way bus. They know about the good work we are doing there and are looking for opportunities.

He also mentioned that there are 32 private service providers across the state and spoke about the Haverhill Northeast Veterans Center where they are converting some housing to single room occupancy for those not able to transition and providing oversight for them. He continued stating that the VA has one of the healthiest hospital systems in Massachusetts. They are looking at a voucher system and engaging a developer to provide multiple housing with social worker support at their facilities.

Secretary Ureña said that he wanted to thank ValleyWorks Career Center for their leadership and great partnership particularly with veterans. Public assistance is only available for veterans in need if they qualify under the federal poverty guidelines. Those who are able to work use the Career Center and must check in weekly. He said that keeps the system honest as there are no debit cards etc. for benefits.

The Secretary spoke about an opportunity in Boston called Boost a Business which is a mentorship program for business owners to not only hire but to mentor a veteran. Chris King oversees this very successful program and those veterans pay it forward. He said that there are Veterans Soldiers Homes in Chelsea and Holyoke where they receive low cost quality care. There are state cemeteries in Agawam and Winchendon which are kept in pristine conditions and the federal cemetery in Bourne where veterans can be buried at no charge with military honors. Spouses can also be buried with the veterans at a minimal cost.

The Secretary then gave the website massvetadvisors.org which has information for all units of service to veterans.

Bob Westcott asked if their families are involved when veterans have problems. Secretary Ureña said that some veterans don't have that support. We encourage those who are ready to relocate to go where they have a support system that will help them keep on track. Rafael mentioned the high suicide rate among veterans at twenty-one (21) per day.

The Secretary said that general population also has a high suicide rate but any number is unacceptable in that society has failed to help them cope. The highest number is middle age white males who suffer from PTS. Vets return from a very stressful environments. He said that there is sometimes a stigma to hiring a veteran and MGH has a home based tool that trains people on what may be stress triggers and how to help families.

Evelyn Friedman spoke about Bach vouchers and that individual housing authorities need to apply and be encouraged to do so.

The Secretary talked about partnerships approved through HUD with oversight and non-profits taking over the case management. John Ratka of the Veterans Northeast Outreach Center has done good work with a campus of veterans housing, oversight and vets not hanging around the building. Bedford is creating 65+ housing and mixed residential housing. The Brighton Marine Hospital, in partnership with Wynn Properties, has built 101 units with for 80% veterans. There is also a brand new and fine facility in Lawrence.

Peter Matthews said that he is pleased to inform folks of the Heinz fund to assist veterans with September 1st being the 10th anniversary of the first soldier killed in Afghanistan.

7. Reports of Committee Chairs

Peter then called on Cal Williams to give the Youth Council report.

- ***Youth Council***

Youth Council Chair Cal Williams said that this quarter, youth council members learned about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). According to the US Department of Labor, WIOA presents an extraordinary opportunity to improve job and career options for our nation's workers and jobseekers through an integrated, job-driven public workforce system that links diverse talent to businesses. It supports the development of strong, vibrant regional economies where businesses thrive and people want to live and work.

WIOA outlines a broader youth vision that supports an integrated service delivery system and gives a framework through which states and local areas can leverage other Federal, State, Local, and private resources to support in-school and out-of-school youth. WIOA authorizes the following changes: A minimum of 75 percent of State and Local youth funding must be used for out-of-school youth; 20% to training funding must include work experience.

Cal said that changes to eligibility are that Out-of-school youth must be aged 16-24, not attending any school, and meet one or more additional conditions, which could include: School dropout; within age of compulsory attendance but has not attended for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter; holds a secondary school diploma or recognized

equivalent and is low-income and is basic skills deficient or an English language learner to mention a few. In-school youth must be aged 14-21, attending school, low income, and meet one or more additional conditions, which could include: Basic skills deficient; English language learner; an offender; homeless, runaway, in foster care or aged out of the foster care system; pregnant or parenting; an individual with a disability; person who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment

There are five new Youth Program elements (1) Financial Literacy; (2) Entrepreneurial skills training; (3) Services that provide labor market and employment information in the local area; (4) Activities that help youth transition to postsecondary education and training; (5) Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

Cal said that there is also an emphasis on Work-Experience and at least 20 percent of local Youth formula funds must be spent on work experiences for in-school and out-school youth, such as summer and year-round employment, pre-apprenticeship, on-the-job training, or internships and job shadowing. Youth Councils are no longer required under WIOA however, "As of July 1, 2015 the Merrimack Valley WIB Youth Council will be named the Merrimack Valley WIB Youth Committee and consist of a board chair, board members, and advisory members." This was voted and approved by the MVWIB Planning Committee on May 19, 2015.

Cal reported that during this quarter, the ValleyWorks Career Center held the first Lawrence High School (LHS) Youth Job fair on May 20th, 2015 at the LHS field house. This was an internal job fair for LHS students only, external job seekers were not invited to attend. In order to prepare students to meet with employers, the staff pre-registered students and conducted on-site Resume Workshops. The staff-led Resume Workshops assisted students in creating a basic resume that they could use to present to employers at the job fair. A total of 63 students attended the resume workshops, 31 of which attended the job fair. 304 students and 23 employers attended. Next year we will do the event earlier before seniors graduate.

WIOA affirms our commitment to providing high quality services for youth and young adults beginning with career exploration and guidance, continued support for educational attainment, opportunities for skills training in in-demand industries and occupations, and culminating with a good job along a career pathway or enrollment in post-secondary education.

- ***Planning Committee***

Planning Committee Chair Juan Yopez reported that this quarter, the MVWIB planning committee primarily dealt with mandatory WIOA changes. Both WIA and WIOA have Youth, Adult and Dislocated Working funding streams. Of these three streams, Youth category changes are to occur first here in Massachusetts. Nationwide, WIOA does away with the Youth Council's statutory role. Under WIA, the Youth Council was responsible for proposing regional youth training vendors and service allocations for Board and CEO approval. Massachusetts directed all WIBs to deal with Youth category WIOA changes first.

Juan said that two months ago the Planning Committee took its first documented step toward WIOA. Although we could have kept the youth council name, we decided to change the group to what is outlined in WIOA. The name change from Council to Committee highlights its

different roles under the WIA and WIOA legislations. The former youth council role is no more and it is now a board subcommittee without a statutory role.

Cal said that our Youth Council has had many active members who are not on the board. Many of them work at youth service partners who provide valuable information on area youth issues. He said that we have decided to include them in the new youth committee as advisory members and hope that these youth service providers continue to participate.

Board members Cal Williams and Mike Strem, and more recently Francisco Brea and Donna Rivera, have made many contributions to the Youth Council. We hope that they continue to serve on the committee as voting board members with Cal as chair. Cal said that he would like to note that Mike Strem is a Newburyport business owner who has driven to Lawrence most every month for many years to attend Youth Council meetings. Last year he provided over \$4,800 for summer youth employment and this year he's again made another, very generous contribution. Mike deserves our gratitude for his dedication and support of area youth and MVWIB youth activities. There was a round of applause for Mike Strem.

Juan continued stating that a couple of weeks ago, the Planning Committee discussed the WIOA youth eligibility sheets in your package. The sheets identify which youth are eligible for youth services under WIOA. But as MVWIB did four years ago under WIA, WIOA also sees that all inner-city low income youth are at-risk. So it includes residency in a low-income US Census tract as yet another barrier. This geographic addition gives the MVWIB a great deal of flexibility in determining which youth should be served.

The Planning Committee discussed whether we should do away with the restriction we implemented several years ago. In this region, we restricted out of school WIA Title I Youth category training to only those youth who have either a high school diploma or a GED, now called HiSET.

Adult category customers overlap with youth category ones because the WIOA Adult category starts at age 18 and the WIOA Youth category ends at age 24. Because of this six year overlap, out of school youth ineligible for our WIOA Youth funded training can be trained using WIOA Adult funds. The possibility of that category reassignment, the fact that there are separate WIOA Title II funds for separate MA DESE funded GED/HiSet and ESOL classes, and also much greater funding for education vs. job training overall, and because we want to support school department efforts and not create a false alternative to youth finishing their high school education, the Planning Committee decided to propose the following motion for board consideration.

Juan Yopez made the motion that in the WIOA Out-of-School Youth Category, the MVWIB will continue to focus on low-income youth who have either graduated from high school or earned a GED/HiSET. Ann Ormond seconded the motion and motion passed unanimously.

Juan then said that in the interest of time he would discuss performance numbers and ITA allocations at our next meeting.

- ***Nominating Committee***

There was no nominating committee report at this time.

8. Report of Executive Director

Rafael said he would talk about the highlights of WIOA. WIOA better articulates the roles of partners. Currently at the Career Center partners include Northern Essex, Job Corps and the Adult Learning Center. Under WIOA we may have a few more including financial support from other partners.

Rafael said that we have a tremendously positive board that has done some trend setting work such as expanding service eligibility for all low income youth and not just those with the most barriers. In the adult category the Board set a 6.9 grade level to be eligible for training. If not at that level, they can attend WIA or WIOA Title II programs to get there.

The reason Rafael said the board made these rules to focus on building greater opportunity for low income people who have the drive and desire to move ahead. If funding were limitless, we could serve everyone forever. But there funding constraints so we have to prioritize. In the past, money has been allocated to those with the most barriers. But that hurt poor people who want to take advantage to the opportunities this country provides. Poor people moving up helps other poor people learn how to move up. Rafael said that today some can get all the benefits of working without working and that they lose most benefits if they work. This is reducing the incentive to work.

Rafael told board members that we are looking for partners to help people who need help and who may not be eligible for training services under our criteria. He especially mentioned WIOA funded DESE programs. Someone who speaks little or no English can take Title II funded courses that will help them move forward.

We should encourage youth to both get a part time job and also attend college. Dr. Paul Harrington stated that chances of graduating from college go up if youth are working 15 hours per week. Rafael also spoke about the percentage of high school graduates (80%) who attend college and the fact that after six years only 30-35% of those 80% get a degree.

Bob Westcott said that often services to help folks get a job is not a ramp off of welfare but a cliff because we are competing with other state programs and we need to find a way to help folks keep some benefits while training to improve their work opportunities and change their destiny.

Joselyn Marte asked about looking at lowering entrance standards for those in DESE programs. Rafael said that we are looking for ways to work more closely together. Perhaps we can find ways of providing supportive services to some ABE and ESOL students to help them get and keep jobs..

9. Other Business

Rosa Lopez spoke about a good program called You're Up in Boston where the youth has a mentor or internship. This creates and fosters a relationship with the employer. There are six (6) months of school four (4) days a week and job and life coaching. This could be something we could look at for Lawrence.

Peter Matthews then said that the good news is the Governor is not going to blow up the system but the focus will be on performance.

Regarding housing, Bob Westcott relayed a story from 15 years ago of a top floor of a tenement which was just remodeled and the rent was Section 8 - \$850 per month. Bridget Shaheen of Lazarus told him of a husband who was working two jobs and a wife who was also working and the fact that they couldn't afford the rent. The federal government decides the going rate.

Evelyn Friedman said that everyone who owns a house has a government subsidy by way of reduced taxes and that HUD regulations are more complicated than Section 8.

10. Adjournment

Having no further business David Tibbetts made a motion to adjourn and Ann Ormond seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Kivell
Recorder