



**Salvatore's Event & Conference Facility**  
**354 Merrimack Street – Entrance B**  
**Lawrence, MA 01843**

**ANNUAL MEETING**

**Minutes**  
**Thursday, October 10, 2013**  
**7:30 AM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sven Amirian, Joseph Bevilacqua, Patrick Blanchette, Ron Contrado, Dr. Lane Glenn, Robert Ingala, Steve Kfoury, Melissa Lachance, Susan Jepson, George Noel, Donna Rivera, Lester Schindel, Nancy Tariot, Bob Westcott, Len Wilson

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Brian DePena, Supt. William DeRosa Atty. Wendy Estrella, Joe Gangi, Jr., Gary Hale, Supt. John Lavoie, Atty. Robert LeBlanc, Jeff Linehan, Eric Mane, Peter Matthews, Michael Munday, Alberto Nunez, Ann Ormond, Cindy Phelan, Steve Salvo, Jeff Sheehy, Evan Silverio, Michael Strem, Stanley Usovicz, Cal Williams, Ray Wrobel, Juan Yopez

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Labor Secretary Joanne Goldstein, Edward Bartkiewicz, Christine Bradshaw, Arthur Chilingirian, Linda Piergeorge, Gail Griffin

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Rafael Abislaiman, Barbara Zeimetz, Mary Kivell, Susan Almono, Cristy Gomez, Corina Ruiz, Arthur Chilingirian, Bryn McLeod, Gary Comins

**1. Call to Order**

A quorum being present, Joseph Bevilacqua called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m.

**2. Welcome & Introductions**

Joe then asked for introductions around the room.

**3. Report of Chair**

Joseph Bevilacqua said that the economy is still troubled and that Secretary Goldstein mentioned that issue in her keynote address at yesterday's Workforce Solutions Summit. The uncertainty in Washington impacts all of us and funding levels will never return to past levels. Funding cuts are being made and we have to adapt but he said that it is difficult to know which way to proceed to serve the needs of employers and workers. He mentioned the success of Riverwalk with over 3,000 jobs and \$100m in private investment. Joe said that WIA reauthorization has been sought for more than ten years old and that it is again unlikely to happen this year.

Joe continued by stating that as Co-Chair of the Mass WIB he would like to thank Secretary Goldstein for coming to today's meeting and agreeing to address the Merrimack Valley Workforce

Investment Board. He spoke about the competitive nature of Merrimack Valley companies and recognized Arthur Chilingirian and his staff at the ValleyWorks Career Center for their work. As board chair of the National Association of Workforce Board Chairs, Joe said that we need to focus efforts on mature workers and youth employment. He praised the current collaboration between the Massachusetts Labor, Education and Workforce Development Secretaries. Joe then mentioned that the Merrimack Valley is a region where every community needs to work together with the others to support economic development and jobs as often times folks may live in one community but work in another.

**4. Approval of Minutes of June 18, 2013**

Chairman Bevilacqua asked for a motion on the minutes of the June 18, 2013 quarterly board meeting.

**Motion by George Noel to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2013 meeting as submitted. Bob Ingala seconded the motion and motion passed unanimously.**

**5. Presentation: Joanne F. Goldstein, Massachusetts Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development**

Massachusetts Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Joanne F. Goldstein said that she enjoyed participating in workforce board meetings and thanked Joe and Ralph for inviting her. Secretary Goldstein said that she would like to discuss with Board members about the most important issues facing the Merrimack Valley region and find ways that the state can help. She said that funding is always the biggest issue and we are being asked to do more with less.

Funding is contingent on Congress and the impact on workforce development budget cuts are being felt in every state. The Secretary said that for now we continue to assess our existing federal grants. It is most likely that our system will continue to downsize so we need to see how to leverage our own dollars. Secretary Goldstein said that she has urged our state and local agencies to think if there is a way to lower rent and other costs.

Secretary Goldstein continued by stating that there will be shifts in our customer base because of UI moving on line. The new UI on-line system is already working with 110,000 UI claimants. Each region needs to analyze how to serve its customer base alongside this new tool. Several regions are beginning to move on these issues and redesign services and the Secretary said that she knows that the Merrimack Valley is pushing the development of its RES/REA program.

Data indicates that 50% of the statewide UI claimant pool has only a high school diploma or less. The Merrimack Valley has an even higher percentage with less than a high school diploma which makes it a greater challenge to provide intensive services. We need to continue to discuss whether to redesign our services or continue to provide intensive services to those with the highest barriers. We need to look at integrating basic skill development and industry credentials beyond high school and job placement along career pathways. We also need to look at using funds to acquire technologies that provide new and efficient learning models to accelerate basic skill acquisition. We need to use WIA dollars in ways that may not fit nicely into the traditional USDOL regulatory structure. Secretary Goldstein said that it is time to take a risk and try the unconventional. She referenced BU professor David Wild and his academic work on low wage workers. She noted that even McDonald's requires online applications for employment.

Another important factor is employer engagement and the marketing of the Workforce Training Fund. Where possible, we should partner with our community colleges to close the skills gap.

Secretary Goldstein said that she often hears from businesses looking for workers with the right skill set but often can't define what the skill set should be. Some want soft skills and some want technical certificates and degrees. They can't agree on what the workforce of the future should be. She cited health care employers who describe polar opposite workforce needs.

Reaching out to business is the key role of Workforce Investment Boards. She said that at the Governor's direction she continues to work with the Secretaries of Education and Housing and Economic Development on a cross-Secretariat jobs agenda coordinated by Mary Beth Campbell. She then called for questions.

Len Wilson asked about consolidating 16 workforce boards to 7 or 8 in Massachusetts. The Secretary said that some want to consolidate and others don't like. The legislature has not mandated they come together but urge it as a best practice. She noted that New Hampshire has only one but Massachusetts does not have the authority to require fewer regions. When WIA is reauthorized it may be required but we are currently able to be in charge of our own destiny.

Bob Westcott said that the economy has stripped US industry of many of its jobs and the government is the private sector's biggest competitor. Now there are not enough jobs to employ even those who are motivated. Going from welfare to skilled jobs is not possible. We need to have more entry-level jobs and replicate the older economy where there were jobs for people at all skill levels. He said that it is almost like we created an economy that doesn't or can't absorb people who are starting out.

Secretary Goldstein said that the problem is limited skills and education. The state and country exported the kind of jobs that were a pathway to the middle class. Some companies are bringing back jobs because of issues with quality control and delivery overseas. She spoke about a company named Darnet which takes shipments from Asia and fixes garments to be sold in retail. She also said that most call centers are overseas. Welfare is now less appealing and most enrollees are mothers with small children. DTA has cut both training and child care. She mentioned a program called COMPASS which trains single mothers and a program at St. Mary's in Dorchester for young women with children. But even if their clients get a job, it will be one where they earn \$8 or \$9 per hour and they will still be below the poverty level.

Francisco Brea said that speaking for his Hispanic community the problem is not skills but the need to get licensed and the process of getting licensed. He said that he had the opportunity to go to work at Malden Mills when he came here 29 years ago. Now people need more opportunities to get training and licensing. He also mentioned that the change to UI Online has created chaos in his community.

The Secretary said that we need to figure a pathway to the jobs that are available. Chili said that his career center performance reports are good but that there are supposedly 90,000 job vacancies in Massachusetts and over 100,000 people on UI. He mentioned the need for short term OJT and what they are doing in Georgia. Secretary Goldstein said that there is a small vocal contingent in Congress opposed to WIA training dollars. Georgia individuals on UI spend 6 weeks working with a company for a trial period covered under workers comp with no wages but getting their UI benefits. There is a limit of how often a company can do this. The new Secretary of DOL supports looking at ways to implement it in Massachusetts.

Lane Glenn spoke of the importance of the three Secretaries working together and the fact that NECC and MCC are working closely with their WIBs, career centers and cities to share resources. Joe mentioned the Partners for Progress working together to address the needs of business.

Rafael said that thanks to President Glenn we will soon have a new site at NECC. This option lets us work with those seeking to be quickly employed. The MVWIB also led in requiring that youth have a high school diploma or a GED to be eligible for WIA training and also by mandating that WIA training enrollees have at 7.9 grade level academic skills. Because of the growing national deficit and debt, we want to help people who can quickly get to work, keep their jobs and pay taxes. Due to increasingly limited resources, we want to partner with more organizations to get people back to work as soon as possible.

## **7. Reports of Committee Chairs**

### **• *Planning Committee***

In the absence of Planning Committee Chair Peter Matthews, member Ron Contrado gave the Committee report. He said that we left our previous Haverhill site four months early and moved into a small, temporary location on the Northern Essex Community College's Haverhill campus. He said that we are happy to announce that the college will soon be relocating us into the space currently occupied by their bookstore. Our Haverhill space costs will be dramatically lower than those at our old site. We are grateful to NECC President Lane Glenn and his trustees for making this possible. Our partnership with the College is a win-win situation.

Ron continued stating that because our current lease at 439 South Union Street ends on December 31<sup>st</sup>, we had also planned to RFP for a new Lawrence lease. The new, Statewide, UI-on line system is likely to reduce staff numbers because fewer people will be needed to provide face-to-face services. We will probably need less space in Lawrence and will save on occupancy costs. But due to funding uncertainties and City of Lawrence plans to possibly include us in their downtown revitalization efforts, the release of a site RFP has been postponed until the spring of 2014.

Besides working to lower our space costs, lower WIA funding, resulted in a Planning Committee vote to lower this region's WIA dislocated worker and adult training cap by 25% or from \$6,000 to \$4,500 per trainee. By so lowering the individual cap we can maintain WIA training participant numbers and help more unemployed people get the skills they need for new jobs. We know that the cap reduction puts additional strain on our training vendors. They may need to increase their class sizes so we are keeping an eye on this issue and may make future adjustments. The youth ITA cap remains at a maximum of \$6,000 per trainee and we encourage vendors to have mixed adult and youth classes.

In response to WIA fund reductions, the planning committee voted to limit Workforce Investment Act Individual Training Account funding to the residents of our workforce region, or to workers displaced from employers who employed them within our region. Until we acted, we were occasionally training people who lived or worked in the Lowell or North Shore WIB regions, and even NH residents who had worked in Massachusetts over a year ago.

Ron said that the Planning Committee exercised the authority the Board delegated to it at the June quarterly board meeting and submitted an annual budget which was subsequently approved by the Division of Career Services under Secretary Goldstein's direction. The budget we submitted allocated 37% of our total funding to training. That higher than required training percentage was achieved because of the grants we applied for and received from the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency, CommCorp, and the Walmart Foundation. To further contain costs, our approved FY '14 budget also included 12 unpaid furlough days for all but five Career Center and WIB staff directors. We also did not refill four job positions previously held by people who retired or left the area. The budget indicated that we were postponing seven lay-offs until six months into the fiscal year, pending possible receipt of additional, non-WIA funds. Ron said that today he is pleased to report that we no longer expect to lay off staff this fiscal year. After July we received new EPA, Clean Energy Center, youth and Eastern Bank Grants.

A Northeast Mass Manufacturing Consortium which we helped start will soon begin Massachusetts CommCorp sponsored CNC and electronic assembly training. This manufacturing training initiative has had a complicated start up, and because of the number of partners involved, the MVWIB will receive very little financial support but we expect things to go more smoothly in the months ahead. We now have enough funds to pay for our current career center and WIB staff for the rest of the fiscal year. We should also realize that all of these things may be overturned if funding and debt agreements are not reached at the Federal level. If the worse happens, please be aware that each lay-off saves us only about \$25,000 during year one because, as public entities, we are responsible for paying unemployment insurance out of our own funds.

The MVWIB is still waiting for responses from the Walmart Foundation for a new \$250,000 grant, and from CommCorp for a small \$23,000 health proposal planning grant in anticipation of a \$250,000 health care worker training grant. We should know that most of these grant funds will again be dedicated to training. We are also submitting various proposals to private foundations. Many of them will have a green focus. Our region of the State contains well over half of the green companies in the Commonwealth.

On an issue that is not just budgetary, the Executive and Planning Committees have agreed to pursue a new MVWIB CEO Agreement in which the MVWIB will exercise more of its non-profit, 501C3 status. Although this path has many non-budgetary dimensions, we believe that the change will help reduce our long-term costs. The Executive and Planning Committees have also agreed to continue focusing some of our youth funding on low-income youth who are doing a good job in school. Ron reminded the board that the MVWIB helped change the subsidized summer employment eligibility guidelines. He said that we are hoping to build on that effort and also strengthen our year-round offerings. As you know, we focus WIA funded youth occupational skills training on out-of-school youth who have either graduated from high school who or who obtained a GED. Our innovative Haverhill-based in-school youth program design helped 21 of its 23 young participants stay in school until graduation and then go to work and/or go to college. The planning committee continues to help build the best possible relationships with area vocational and academic high schools.

- ***Youth Council***

In the absence of Youth Council Chair Cal Williams, Youth Council member Donna Rivera gave the Youth Council report. She said that this has been a very productive and rewarding year for Merrimack Valley youth programming. During the last quarter, we were able to connect youth with many academic and work related opportunities. She said that this summer MVWIB & VWCC youth staff have again ensured a seamless and productive summer job experience for hundreds of youth and their employers. We provided subsidized jobs to 244 income eligible youth from the cities of Lawrence (141), Haverhill (82), and Methuen (21). We received a total of 594 completed applications [Lawrence - 393, Haverhill - 158, and Methuen - 43]. The total CommCorp allocation was \$478,072 to serve 249 youth. Last minute funding passed by Legislators and approved by the Governor provided a great opportunity for many of our employers to make a big difference in a

young person's future by providing a summer job. We are happy to report that approximately 15 youth later obtained unsubsidized employment. At our last quarterly board meeting, many of us heard Paul Harrington say that one of the indicators of future career success is whether youth had a job while young. Your summer youth program will have a long-term impact on many area youth.

Our proposal for the Year-Round YouthWorks program will allow us to continue working with youth from Lawrence, Haverhill, and Methuen at other times of the year. The year-round program will deliver work-based learning opportunities and employment placements for up to 110 low income older youth, aged 17-21. Our program design is in keeping with the Governor's workforce priority of strengthening youth education, training and employment to create a pipeline of new workers with the skills to succeed in our evolving economy. Our 2013-2014 Year-Round YouthWorks program goal is to provide participants with comprehensive career development services to prepare them for entry into the workforce. Youth's ability to meet this goal will be improved through 22 hours of workshops based on the CommCorp Signaling Success career readiness curriculum, and by up to 200 hours of subsidized work-based learning.

In-school students at Lawrence and Haverhill High Schools and out-of-school youth from Lawrence, Haverhill, and Methuen (10% of total eligible youth enrolled may be from Methuen) will participate. A single Youth Career Counselor will provide case management to each enrolled youth. The Youth Career Counselor will identify and assist participants in post-secondary/ post program job search or school or occupational training enrollment. The Counselor's success will ultimately be measured by the number of program participants who later work in unsubsidized jobs or who enroll in post secondary education. Program operation will begin in November 2013 and end in May 2014.

The Bridging the Opportunity Gap (BOG) initiative provides a variety of employment-related services to DYS youth. It is specially focused on youth returning to their home communities following residential treatment or what my generation used to call reform school. Our BOG program offers comprehensive employability services including career readiness, workforce certifications, and subsidized employment. With the \$20,000 awarded to us by CommCorp we were able to serve 12 youth this summer.

Donna continued stating that we aim to achieve at least an 80% completion rate for the 20 additional DYS youth we will serve in our year-round program. Its positive outcomes include number of program completers, job referrals, and job placements in unsubsidized jobs. Program components/outcomes will include ten (10) hours of orientation, a minimum of ten (10) career readiness and youth development sessions, completion of a Youth Career Portfolio, and up to 200 hours of subsidized employment for all participants. Youth will also receive an industry recognized credential and referral to an educational program if appropriate.

The MVWIB has been awarded \$97,554 for a FY14 Connecting Activities initiative from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Connecting Activities is a comprehensive program that helps at-risk Merrimack Valley youth become college and career ready. It will also offer teachers' professional externship opportunities in a number of private sector settings that help students better understand how area companies and their workers use STEM skills every day. With hands-on information, teachers are better able to show their students the connection between "work" and "learning" in the classroom. With this funding we will provide quality work and learning experiences to 325 youth. Connecting Activities funding will be available to five high

schools where the student population has the greatest need. These are Lawrence, Methuen, Haverhill, Triton, and Newburyport high schools.

We also received \$50k in funding from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) which we will focus on Green job related Connecting Activities. This funding is to be used over a period of three years to increase high school students' exposure to clean energy careers.

We will continue to work closely with school administrators, teachers, students, their family members, and employers in order to educate students about the three key messages of the MA Future Ready Campaign:

1. **START NOW:** It's never too early or too late to start planning for your future
2. **AIM HIGH:** Students who challenge themselves through a rigorous course of study are usually the ones who go to the farthest; and
3. **LOOK BEYOND (Outside the Classroom):** Learning opportunities that support career pathway development are everywhere.
4. **The AMP It Up! Program and STEM @Scale programs** will assist us to get the word out to schools administrators, guidance counselors, students, parents, and employers. They provide students the opportunity to learn about real workplaces and explore on-site career pathways related to Advanced Manufacturing and STEM Careers.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education awarded us Pathways funding to broker education, training, and employment options that address the unique academic, employment, and career needs of post-12<sup>th</sup> grade students from the Classes of 2003 – 2014 who require further assistance to attain the skills necessary to pass the MCAS in order to complete the state required Competency Determination for high school graduation. We were awarded \$44,319 for the School Year and \$10,651 for the summer of 2014.

We are also pleased to report that due to the success of our Haverhill High School In-School WIA Youth Program - Students Need a Plan, the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (the MVWIB) agreed to replicate the program elsewhere. We are seeking request for proposals to provide guidance/education and employment and training preparation services to economically disadvantaged in-school youth living in one or more of the following cities and towns: Andover, Amesbury, Boxford, Groveland, Georgetown, Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, Merrimac, Newbury, Newburyport, North Andover, Rowley, Salisbury and West Newbury. Although it is open to all, Lawrence, Haverhill and Methuen are the most likely sites.

The intent of this In-School Youth Program RFP is to connect at-risk seniors with counseling and information that will keep them in school until they graduate and then help them get jobs and go to college. Again, as Dr. Harrington said at our last meeting, these simultaneous and dual activities are the best indicators of future career success. We want to better prepare these students to make informed and productive future education, training and employment choices.

More generally, going forward we will continue to create more balance in the gender of youth enrolled and served in our WIA funded programs. Until recently, we overwhelmingly served mostly females. The WIA Youth Individual Training Account (ITA) cap will remain the same - \$6,000, or \$1,500 more than the adult cap.

- ***Nominating Committee***

Patrick Blanchette stated that Mayor Lantigua has extended several current members board term until December 31, 2013. Whoever the Mayor will be may then reappoint members or appoint others.

### **8. Election of Officers**

Joe then introduced Lawrence Economic Development Director Patrick Blanchette who is representing Mayor Lantigua. Mr. Blanchette said that due to the upcoming election and in order to comply with regulations, Mayor Lantigua is asking the board to take a vote today to keep the current slate of officers and made **the motion that; Joseph Bevilacqua, President; Peter Matthews, Vice Chair; Ray Wrobel, Treasurer; and Ann Ormond Clerk be elected with the caveat that once the Mayoral election is held the new Mayor may call for a new vote from the board at a subsequent quarterly board meeting.**

**Motion by George Noel seconded by Bob Westcott to close nominations. Motion passed.**

**Motion by Len Wilson and seconded by Bob Westcott to approve the election of Joseph Bevilacqua, President; Peter Matthews, Vice Chair; Ray Wrobel, Treasurer; and Ann Ormond Clerk with the caveat that once the Mayoral election is held the new Mayor may call for a vote from the board at a subsequent quarterly board meeting. Motion passed unanimously.**

### **9. Report of Executive Director**

Rafael Abislaiman distributed a Strategic Plan Principles handout that included the goals for Dislocated and Adult Workers, Youth and Partner Relations.

#### **Dislocated and 'Adult' Workers**

1. Continue to focus our regional workforce development pipeline on advanced manufacturing, entry to mid-level health care, green technology and other emerging industries but do not eliminate substantial support to other areas that have job openings and good wages.
2. Narrow who is considered marketable when unemployment is high and expand who is considered marketable when unemployment is low. This especially applies to people formerly employed in high unemployment sectors while other sectors that require similar skills have lower unemployment.
3. Continue to focus WIA Title I funds on occupational skills training and not on academic remediation. Encourage WIA Title II recipients to dedicate a part of their academic remediation funding towards preparing adult and family literacy students for occupational skills training.
4. Continue setting limits to how much Title I money should be spent per individual. Base limits on funding availability and sector unemployment levels. Ensure customers have achieved appropriate academic skill levels before placing them in WIA-funded training.
5. Because of the impact of UI On-line, expand marketing efforts to draw people who would benefit from training and other WIA intensive services.

## Youth

1. End the idea that the workforce development system is an alternative to acquiring a good academic foundation and graduating from high school. Continue to consider poverty the over-riding barrier.
2. Continue to allocate a portion of youth subsidized employment money by lottery while also dedicating a portion to rewarding low-income youth who have maintained good grades/comportment or significantly improved them.
3. Seek, encourage and counsel economically disadvantaged youth who have a good academic foundation to both work and go to college. Tangibly encourage dependability as appropriate.

## Partner Relations

1. Seek out ways to cost-effectively obtain data that helps gauge the effectiveness of career center services and vendor offered training. Data should help gauge their respective effectiveness in both the short and long term. Work with employer, educator and other partners to adjust action in accordance with the changing economic and workforce development situation.
2. Clearly advise State and Federal administrators on regional perceptions of federal and statewide policy and process changes as they impact direct services and service outcomes. Raise issues important to employers, educators and the unemployed.

Rafael also provided a FY2014 first quarter dashboard, labor market statistics, ITA numbers by sectors, Career Center numbers, and BSR Monthly Activity Report. He began his remarks by stating that many manufacturing contractors have been hit hard by costs compared to other countries. We will continue to focus on advanced manufacturing, entry to mid-level health care, green technology and other emerging industries. Manufacturing produces the most income for the region, green and innovative companies the most growth and health care related fields provides the most entry level positions to people that we train with WIA funds. These themes will be addressed in our strategic plan.

Due to UI On-line there has been a significant change in the number of Career Center clients served face to face. We have only 55% of the client numbers we had last year at this time but those numbers are starting to go up. Rafael said that we cannot count on business as usual and the Strategic Plan is looking at other ways to serve employers and unemployed people. One way is through business service improvements such as customizing training to match employer needs.

Due to the federal sequestration we have only received 8% of our FY 2014 first quarter WIA funding. Most of it went to staff. Most training will start as soon as the money is loosened up. WIA funding is not considered essential under Sequestration and we are not receiving adult or dislocated worker monies till later in October.

**Motion by Len Wilson seconded by Bob Westcott to approve the Strategic Plan Principles as presented. Motion passed unanimously.**

Chairman Bevilacqua then thanked the Rafael and the WIB staff for their work and mentioned that at a meeting the day before there was discussion about the automobile industry that really brought home the need to know new technology. Joe also thanked Secretary Goldstein for attending and staying for the meeting and for always being so supportive.

**10. Adjournment**

**Having no further business George Noel made a motion to adjourn and Len Wilson seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Recorder