



Greater Lawrence Technical School
57 River Road
Andover, MA 01810

QUARTERLY MEETING

Minutes
Wednesday, March 12, 2014
7:30 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Edward Bartkiewicz, Joseph Bevilacqua, Francisco Brea, Supt. William DeRosa, Atty. Wendy Estrella, Dr. Lane Glenn, Robert Ingala, Steve Kfoury, Supt. John Lavoie, Peter Matthews, Michael Munday, Donna Rivera, Nancy Tariot, Cal Williams, Ray Wrobel

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Sven Amirian, Brian DePena, Ron Contrado, Joe Gangi, Jr., Gary Hale, Susan Jepson, Melissa Lachance, Atty. Robert LeBlanc, Jeff Linehan, George Noel, Alberto Nunez, Ann Ormond, Cindy Phelan, Steve Salvo, Lester Schindel, Jeff Sheehy, Michael Strem, Stanley Usovich, Bob Westcott, Juan Yopez

GUESTS PRESENT:

Michael Bevilacqua, Arthur Chilingirian, Andrew Diamond, Amalia Perez del Pulgar for Susan Jepson, Tom Raiche, Lisa Torrasi

STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono, Cristy Gomez, Odanis Hernandez, Mary Kivell, Brian Norris, Corina Ruiz, Barbara Zeimetz

1. Call to Order

A quorum being present, Joseph Bevilacqua called the meeting to order 7:5a.m.

2. Welcome & Introductions

Joe said we would have introductions around the table upon the arrival of Mayor Rivera and then called on Superintendent Lavoie.

Superintendent Lavoie said it was an honor and pleasure to welcome board members to the Greater Lawrence Vocational High School. He said that academically, the school is continuing to improve. 90% of students are now passing the MCAS ELA and 70% pass MCAS Math. This is a dramatic increase over the past four years. Vocationally, the school has 100 students going out on jobs.

Some of the challenges faced are whether to encourage students to go to college or on to jobs as their mission is to prepare students for careers. Supt Lavoie said that if academic skills are strong they will succeed in jobs and can also go on to college. Currently they have over 1,000 students with 375 freshmen. 875 youth have applied for admission and they are still accepting applications.

They are continuing to look at workforce needs and their interest in manufacturing has grown. Therefore they are working to secure a grant to implement a Machine Shop Program in September. They have a meeting scheduled the end of this month with machine companies to show the state they have industry support. They are also reinforcing their STEM programs such as electrical, IT, biotech. They use data from the MVWIB and are partnering with the MVWIB on an after school grant.

Supt. Lavoie continued by stating that Greater Lawrence will be the first school in the Commonwealth to be 100% solar powered. They are looking to go on line the end of May. In June they are implementing a HVAC renovation project which is 80% funded by the state. Also on the horizon is a campaign for a \$4.5m athletic facility. He concluded his remarks stating that 75% of the students are from Lawrence, 20% from Methuen and the balance from Andover and North Andover.

Joe Bevilacqua said that he is very excited about solar energy and the fact that alternate energy will be a great source of jobs.

3. Approval of Minutes of October 10, 2013

Chairman Bevilacqua asked for a motion on the minutes of the October 10, 2013 quarterly board meeting.

Motion by Cal Williams to approve the minutes of the October 10, 2013 meeting as submitted. Donna Rivera seconded the motion and motion passed unanimously.

4. Report of Chair

Joseph Bevilacqua said that as MVWIB Chair, Mass WIB Co-Chair and Chair of the National Association of WIB Chairs he recently attended a conference in Washington, DC. The issue of funding was raised and it is now seen not as a reduction but as a realignment. The focus is for training to be connected to a job. There are many discussions on apprenticeships which the unions have been talking about for years. The President has asked Vice President Biden to ask Labor Secretary Perez to teleconference with WIB chairs and gather feedback.

Joe said that a Harvard professor spoke about middle skill jobs and the need for technical aspects of a job but also the need for soft skills (foundation skills). He also cited a study where many companies are considering outsourcing to meet their workforce needs. Joe said that apprenticeships in the USA are low but in Europe and particularly in Germany they are high.

Joe also mentioned that there were discussions on how to encourage the unemployed to take a lower level job as a means of opening the door or about encouraging volunteerism as a means of getting back into a work regimen. Joe said that there are a number of different issues around the country and inner cities have more struggles to overcome in the new global economy. He said that funding is unlikely to be restored to prior year levels.

We need to be ready on the apprenticeship idea. He asked Ralph if he had any comments on the teleconference from Secretary Perez. Rafael said that the Secretary has large plans but there was no discussion about large money. Apprenticeships are often more expensive than train because the workforce system pays employers a portion of their employees' salaries for weeks or months. Joe said that every state has different ideas and they will evaluate what has worked and what hasn't worked. Joe then welcomed Mayor Rivera to the meeting.

5. Presentation: Honorable Daniel Rivera, Mayor of Lawrence and Chief Elected Official

Lawrence Mayor Daniel Rivera thanked the board for the opportunity to speak noting that his administration is new and is working to see how things tie in. Mayor Rivera said that one thing he knows is that workforce development and the WIB are essential to Lawrence. Mayor Rivera said that what we need to do is reduce Lawrence's double digit unemployment rate as that rate has a negative impact on real families and that it impacts the schools. We need to do everything possible to improve the situation and this organization is crucial to making that happen.

The city has received a Working Cities grant for \$700,000 and part of that grant is integrating this organization with other organizations in the City. Mayor Rivera said that Rafael is a stellar professional and that he does not plan to remove him from his job. What we need to do change is the unemployment numbers and also make a real impact on the long-term youth unemployment picture by working closely with schools. He said that he looks forward to working with the WIB and said that he may make some mistakes but is committed to making a difference in reducing unemployment in Lawrence.

Joe Bevilacqua said that this WIB is dedicated to helping this Mayor and other Mayors in our region. We are looking to put kids to work in the summer and everyone is a partner as part of the Mayor's economic team.

7. Reports of Committee Chairs

- ***Planning Committee***

Planning Committee Chair Peter Matthews said that we've instituted various policy changes that address the large and persistent national WIA funding cuts. We're also looking for as many non-WIA funds as possible. Board approved policy changes addressing funding cuts were recently made less restrictive because we are having difficulty recruiting people for training. Instead of a blanket restriction, we now prefer that Individual Training Account funds be allocated to people who live or worked in this region. Before we restricted training to people in our region. Before that, up to 20% of our Federal WIA ITA allocations were being made to people from other Massachusetts regions or people who live in New Hampshire. We now hope to keep this percentage lower but we need to be a bit more flexible to meet training numbers. We must for example, serve Veteran customers where ever they live. So we've temporarily ended the restriction that no out-of-region people be served and will now treat regional residents as our preferred and not as our exclusive customers.

Peter said that to address funding cuts, we stopped occupational skills training for out-of-school youth who have dropped out of school and not obtained a GED. He said that with our reduced funding and facing current high national youth unemployment, there is no way that we can adequately address the needs of disconnected youth – and by that he said he means youth who are both unemployed and out-of-school without a diploma. Rather than continuing the illusion that there's a good alternative to graduating from high school or having a GED, we try to help youth stay in school and learn.

We also set out that if a young high school graduate had academic skills below 8.9, academic skill development must be included in their vendor-provided ITA training. An all too large percentage of today's high school graduates do not have 9th grade level skills. That's why the MVWIB Planning and Executive Committees have expressed their willingness to work with Receiver Riley and that's why we took an active role in the development of the Working Cities proposal. Our system does not have the resources to deliver significant academic improvements and also deliver

job skill training that helps people get industry-recognized certificates for jobs that require specific occupational and technical skill. That's why we want to help primary and secondary schools with their outcomes and also partner with NECC.

Peter continued stating that to better deal with youth education and the unemployment issues situation, the Planning Committee recently approved to slightly lower training enrollment restrictions for customers referred to us by WIA Title II training providers. We are funded by WIA Title I so it's an obvious partnership. If a WIA Title II ESOL or ABE vendor endorses a student and proves that the student is making rapid learning progress through excellent program attendance, we may lower our admission criteria for that student.

We also had a very successful in-school youth program in Haverhill last school year and we have one in both Haverhill and Methuen this year. We RFP'd to also have one in Lawrence and the School System did not respond to our RFP but LARE training offered to work with them. LARE ultimately could not do so because Lawrence Public Schools initiated their own extended-day program for at-risk youth with much larger, non-labor department funds.

Peter mentioned that Board members may recall that the MVWIB proposed to put a \$2M Career Center annex in Lawrence High School using Federal Innovation funds a couple of years ago. Unfortunately it was not funded by the US Department of Labor but Peter said that he was pleased to announce that a similar concept was included in the Lawrence Working Cities plan which was selected for funding by the Federal Reserve Bank in January. MVWIB staff helped focus Lawrence's Working Cities proposal on Lawrence Public Schools.

He continued by stating that we've never had the High School Diploma or GED restriction for people over eighteen but that, about three years ago, adult and dislocated worker training was restricted to people who had achieved at least an average 7.9 grade level. We have recently voted to lower the average adult and dislocated worker grade level to 6.9, again because of current training recruitment problems and because the economy may be improving.

Peter then said that we are soon slated to occupy what was the Northern Essex Community College Book Store in its Haverhill student union building. The Planning Committee believes that occupying the bookstore site will help unemployed and underemployed people throughout the region. It will strengthen both the WIB and the College. With the over 30% national drop in WIA funding over the last four years and a strong possibility of future cuts, a long-term site at NECC Haverhill will keep occupancy costs low and help us draw people who want to work into our workforce training and industry certificate system.

The Career Center and MVWIB office location in Lawrence is still pending. The lease at 439 South Union Street expired on December 31, 2013 and we are not sure how much we will ultimately have to pay per month for overstaying our lease. A new RFP was issued by the City of Lawrence last week. We expect to move into a new Lawrence site by October 1, 2014. The area around Common and Essex Street have greatly improved with Northern Essex Community College's development of its Health Education Center and other NECC activities. Current attempts look to locating us somewhere closer to that general vicinity.

In October, we met with Massachusetts Labor Secretary Joanna Goldstein and she announced her resignation in January. She moved on to Northeastern University. During her presentation to the Board, Secretary Goldstein stated that she's learned that government is complicated and that there

is more than one side to every issue. We are sure that her tenure wasn't made simpler by the kick-off of UI On-line.

That automated system has been a statewide problem and those problems have been on the front page of several newspapers in other parts of the State. Difficulties with UI-Online is impacting our work performance because Career Center staff are all-too-often helping customers use the faulty system rather than helping customers get jobs. This has impacted our training enrollment numbers. The first quarter Congressional sequester also impacted it. People who then wanted to be trained couldn't because money wasn't available. The end of UI extensions also impacted it. Many people want to be trained toward the end of their UI benefit cycle. A perhaps unexpected shortening of the UI benefit cycle has obliged many people to look for and take lower paying jobs rather than attempt to enroll in training.

For whatever reason, despite UI on-line, face-to-face customer visits to our and other career centers have been increasing almost monthly after a drastic initial drop but despite recent increases, our year-to-year numbers will be down, just a lot less than the 50% projection we initially heard.

In January, Under-Secretary James told Ralph and other WIB EDs that all State WIBs will be conditionally recertified till perhaps June of this year. Regions that are not recertified will be merged with WIBs that are. We are in good shape as far as recertification goes but we need to rework our Career Center Charter because of implementation delays. Those delays were not caused by us but by State union negotiations which seem to have been resolved, though we have seen nothing in writing. We may reduce the intensity of State and local staff integration in any plan going forward.

Peter also said that our board member matrix also needs to be firmed up for recertification. We look forward to working with Mayor Rivera's MVWIB appointees. The Mayor's appointment of Francisco Brea to the board clears up a certification issue as we now have two union representatives as board members and are thus now in compliance with a Workforce Investment Act mandate. We also need to do another CEO-WIB agreement, this time with the Honorable Mayor Daniel Rivera as signatory. The Planning Committee has seen and signed off on three versions of that agreement, but our preference has been to strengthen the regional nature of this organization. We will work with Mayor Rivera as he decides.

Peter then referred to other funds we have been pursuing. Top amongst these are National Emergency Grants. We have been able to obtain hundreds of thousands of dollars on each of them. Next is Commonwealth of Massachusetts Labor Secretariat funding. We've applied alone or in partnership for a series of CommCorp training grants, the most noteworthy of which are Youth or advanced manufacturing training -related.

Peter said that we received notice of another NEG funding stream last week. This region will receive over \$600,000 as part of that NEG. We recently successfully applied in partnership with three area WIBs for a Massachusetts Economic Development grant and we are now housing in Lawrence a market manager to help advanced manufacturing companies connect with each other and with community colleges and technical schools in this and the Lowell regions. We have also received several U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and private Grants. These grants have just about doubled this region's WIA formula allocation. They now make up less than half of our total annual funding. We hope to build on these efforts in the months ahead.

Peter then said that a MVWIB MOU with the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission is included in members' packages. It is intended to promote Local Hiring for clean energy improvements at area municipal buildings. We currently provide related training. Private contractors are sometimes mandated to hire people to do local work. But when unemployment is high municipal leaders also want to increase business activity in their communities so that more people have jobs and prosper. They do not want to create restrictions that might scare businesses away. Therefore, the Memorandum of Understanding is not proscriptive and instead facilitates local hiring by offering WIB training of prospective employees who are guaranteed hire if adequately trained and if there's adequate funding. Chairman Matthews then said that he would like a motion to approve the MOU unless there is further discussion.

Joe Bevilacqua asked if there was any discussion and hearing none called for a motion.

Motion by Cal Williams, seconded by John Lavoie, to approve the MOU with the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission as submitted. Motion passed.

- ***Youth Council***

Youth Council Chair Cal Williams, presented the Second Quarter Report stating that we started our Year-Round YouthWorks program last quarter. Fifty in-school youth who attend Lawrence or Haverhill High School, and up to sixty out-of-school youth in Lawrence, Haverhill or Methuen will get comprehensive career development services and temporary subsidized employment that culminates in transitions to future education, training and unsubsidized employment.

On Friday October 4, 2013, as part of National Manufacturing Day, MVWIB and Valleyworks staff held a Youth Tour in Manufacturing. Lawrence High School visited two manufacturing companies and spoke with their CEOs. Such events give students the opportunity to learn about real workplaces and explore career pathways. Students visited Arwood Machine Corporation in Newburyport and Mainstream Global in Lawrence to observe employees working in the advanced manufacturing field. Students got a sense of daily workplace activities and asked questions about actual jobs, career ladders, and salaries. The diverse students who participated wanted to learn as much as possible about the education level, responsibilities, skills, and future outlook of the occupations they are considering for future employment. We exposed Lawrence High School students to the advanced manufacturing field and encouraged them to continue with their education, take the leap into post secondary training, and seek employment as craftsmen on an advanced manufacturing career pathway. We explained that this region was once America's industrial heartland and reiterated that local manufacturers are counting on us – youth, schools and the workforce system - to prepare the workforce of tomorrow. We made ourselves available to provide them with more guidance on career options with which they can plan their future. Cal then thanked board members Mike Munday of Arwood Machine and Juan Yopez of Mainstream Global for hosting these students.

The Division of Career Services (DCS) conducted their annual review of our Youth Program Systems. Cal said that it monitors whether our operations are in accordance with Federal and State rules and regulations. The on-site review lasted five work days from October 21st to the 28th. They checked customer files and interviewed appropriate administrative and operational staff. Their Final Report did not contain any negative findings nor are we required to do any corrective actions. Our systems are again fully Certified. The WIB and Career Center youth departments have done very well. This year we plan on increasing the number served and the number of youth who gain employment. Although we receive the 8th largest WIA allocation in Massachusetts, in FY 2013 we were 4th in the number of youth who gained employment.

In the Fall we released an RFP looking for vendors to help high school seniors at-risk of dropping out of school. Proposals are judged on the quality of their connections with school staff and their ability to provide in-school services that result in graduation and then either employment or enrollment in post-secondary education. Activities focus on counseling program enrollees to help them make informed and productive education, training and employment choices. The program is set-up to reward good performance with various stipends. It also helps students get work place experience at a variety of area work sites. The RFP was distributed to private vendors and all public high schools in our region. It was also advertised in the local papers and on our website but we only received two responses: One from the Haverhill Public Schools, and one from American Training/LARE. Both requests were approved for funding by the Planning Committee. The Haverhill Public School Program will serve 18 high school seniors and receive \$66,370. American Training/LARE will serve 10 Methuen High Seniors with \$36,880. We tried to involve Lawrence but at-risk students already have an extended day schedule.

Staff continue to visit local high schools to help youth link with employers and workplace experiences that will reinforce the connection between learning and work. We are currently looking for companies interested in supporting internships and youth mentoring. We are also setting up math and science teacher externships to help make their curricula more dynamic, up-to-date, and hands-on. Cal said to please let Cristy Gomez know if you would like more information on the program.

Cal then concluded his remarks stating that the MVWIB has been awarded a second AMP it up! grant. This small grant allows us to continue and expand our advanced manufacturing job public outreach campaign. The program will continue to emphasize the links between obtaining a high school degree and gaining the credentials necessary for jobs in advanced manufacturing.

- ***Nominating Committee***

There was no Nominating Committee report.

8. Report of Executive Director

Rafael Abislaiman said that Nominating Committee Chair Ann Ormond extends her regrets as she is unable to attend today's meeting but is pleased at the appointment of Francisco Brea whose nomination she reviewed three years ago.

Francisco said that he is the coordinator of Rapid Response at Mass AFL/CIO. He explained that he used to work at Malden Mills and received training after the fire through the WIB so he knows firsthand how training can impact employment. He said that he is looking forward to working with everyone and that the Mass AFL/CIO tries to help all workers.

Rafael said that he would like to let everyone know that we are working with unions in many areas. One area is union apprenticeships and Francisco has invited Bob Bower from the AFL/CIO to address our Youth Council on their Apprenticeship Program during our next meeting in April.

Rafael said that he agrees with the Mayor and that we as managers need to write people up if they are not performing. Union seniority is good but not if there is a problem recording inadequate performance. Rafael also said that government needs to be of a size to match today's complicated economy and security issues. If government is grows without improvements in effectiveness, then we are just burning money.

Rafael referenced a sheet with several years of WIA allocations listed and noted that with this year's cut in funding, our budget has been reduced by over 30% in the last three years. We have been looking for non WIA money and we hope to build on that success. Ralph said that we need to focus more on job training rather than academic remediation. Our priority is job development and although Ralph realizes the importance of good academics, accountability should be placed on the K-12 system and workforce development should do less remediation and more job training to help people get and keep good jobs. He support Receiver Riley's reforms.

Lawrence is the Commonwealth's sole recipient of a large Working Cities grant and the MVWIB also hopes to help with that effort. Ralph then asked if there were any questions. There were none.

Joe mentioned that in 2013 we served 170 kids from Lawrence in the Summer Youth Program. The ValleyWorks Career Center served almost 17,000 which is one the highest numbers in the state serving folks from here to Newburyport. Mayor Rivera asked how many got jobs and Chili said that there is a delay in accessing job placement numbers but that he would provide the Mayor with information.

Rafael continued stating that our system is working with less information as we should have real-time wage data from the Dept. of Revenue which is not provided. We have to wait 9 months for information on who got a job. He said that Chili and his staff are to be commended for usually doing more with their allocation as they are 8th in funding but always come in 3rd or 4th in numbers served and jobs gained. This year may be a problem because of UI on line and other reasons.

Rafael continued stating that part of the problem with WIB recertification is that it may be meant to reduce the number of WIBs in the state. MA has 16 WIBs while New Hampshire has one and Connecticut two. Ultimately, there will be a reduction and we want this region to be one of the survivors. Ralph continued by stating that Board member Eddie Bartkiewicz is from DCS, the oversight arm of DOL, and DCS will be looking for up to date bylaws. Copies were sent out to the board for review. The Mayor is a partner with the board and the board sets policy and drafts a budget which is not implemented until passed by the Mayor.

Ralph said that he would like a motion to approve the bylaws and Mayor Rivera recommended tabling the matter for further review. Rafael said that he was concerned with conditional certification without approval of the bylaws. Joe suggested referring the bylaws to the Planning Committee where they could be discussed with the Mayor in attendance. The Mayor also opined that they bylaws should be brought back to the full board for a vote at a time to be determined.

Motion by Robert Ingala, seconded by Cal Williams, to table the By-Law Revisions and to bring them back to the full board for a vote at an appropriate time. Motion passed unanimously.

9. Adjournment

Having no further business Supt. John Lavoie made a motion to adjourn and Robert Ingala seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Recorder