



# **YOUTH COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES**

**Thursday, January 13, 2016  
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board  
439 South Union – Suite 102  
Lawrence, MA 01843**

### **Youth Committee MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Howard Allen, Francisco Brea, Irene Chalek, Linda Piergeorge, Tom Raiche, Michael Strem, Ellen Weinhold

### **MVWIB Youth Committee MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Michael Bevilacqua, Beverly DeSalvo, Brad Howell, Superintendent John Lavoie, April Lyszkowsky, Wilberto Mejias, Sonia Morales, Donna Rivera, David Tagliaferri, Ed Warnshuis, Cal Williams

### **MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:**

Rafael Abislaiman, Cristy Gomez, Mary Kivell

**OTHERS:** Dale Hollingshead for Supt. Lavoie, Alishah Mohammed for April Lyszkowsky, Kelly Conlin, Jackie Romero

### **I. Call to Order**

A quorum being present, in the absence of Cal Williams, board member Ellen Weinhold called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m. and introductions were made around the table.

### **II. WIOA Update**

Rafael Abislaiman said that he continues to address the differences between WIA and WIOA to inform the Board and the Youth Committee.

By WIOA law, all Career Centers will be RFP'd. Right now the RFP framework is being discussed by State employees and WIB Executive Directors. Rafael said that the RFP would determine who will be in-charge of our career center and we don't know how things may play out though it is likely that most of the staff will stay. There are State staff as part of ValleyWorks staffing and all line staff are unionized. ValleyWorks is only

one of two career centers in the State where both municipal and State staff are unionized. This may present issues.

The second thing that should be noted, apart from WIA/WIOA differences, is that there was an RFP released on our future location/space. Three proposals have been received and are under review.

Another matter is that we need to find some way of doing a better job with WIOA money as it relates to youth. There are an insufficient number of youth coming into the career center. Some center staff think that is this is because the WIB requires a high school diploma or HiSet with an academic equivalent of 7.9. Rafael thinks that it is more of an outreach and recruitment issue.

Discussion followed with Irene Chalek stating that some folks without a diploma may be more in need of training. Rafael said that the WIB may consider lowering the academic level. He said that people from other countries who have not had educational opportunities may be an exception. But we don't want to alienate native born people. The board decided to reinforce our education policy because WIOA Title I funds are for workforce development and WIOA Title II are for remedial education.

Rafael also said that Hispanic youth have the lowest employment rate in the country and perhaps we should be helping those who drop out of college. He noted that of those attending college only about 33% get any sort of degree.

Mike Strem wondered if UI has bottomed out and feels it may be going up. Francisco cited his life employment experience and said that WIOA should try to connect opportunities for those who don't go to school. Rafael also mentioned that Lawrence High School doesn't have any shop programs. Allishah Mohamed said that is part of the frustration. Students learn in different ways and not enough of them can get into the Voke.

Dale Hollingshead spoke about a study at the University of Southern Illinois on college and career readiness and why smart kids drop out. The conclusion is that they don't have the resilience to stay in school. They seem to need a program to provide social and emotional supports to deal with everyday life. Howard Allen spoke about starting a program to prepare and support children as some are not emotionally ready for college at graduation.

### **III. Approval of the November 12, 2015 Minutes**

Ellen then called for a motion to approve the November 12, 2015 minutes.

**Motion by Howard Allen, seconded by Irene Chalek, to approve the minutes of the November 12, 2015 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.**

#### **IV. Programs Update.**

Cristy Gomez reported on the 2015 Youth Programs. She said that during 2015 we aligned our Amp it UP!, Bridging the Opportunity Gap, Connecting Activities (CA), Lawrence Mayor Summer Initiative, STEM Careers in Clean Energy, Workforce Investment Act Title I Youth, now Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, YouthWorks Summer, and YouthWorks Year Round programs to achieve more intensive programming. Alignment created a seamless continuum of services that keep youth engaged in learning, work and career planning and in taking the educational steps needed to continue with their career interests, get, and keep good jobs. Utilizing the Mass Clean Energy Center funds, we partnered with Lawrence Family Development Charter School (LFDCS) to build student awareness of both clean energy and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math or STEM related careers. LFDCS Students participated in engineering-related projects. These STEM activities provided career awareness to LFDCS students who were mentored by undergraduate engineering students from UMass/Lowell. An Engineering Extravaganza event was held on February 24th.

LARE's WIA-funded High School Senior Success Program started in January. Ten Methuen High School students were enrolled. The program provided guidance and employment and training preparation to Methuen High School seniors. Year Round YouthWorks successfully completing its 2nd cycle. 40 out of school youth successfully completed the program.

Cristy stated that they held a Job Shadow Day for 12 Haverhill High School Students last Spring. The VWCC staff were able to offer students a day at various interesting worksites. City of Haverhill Mayor Fiorentini sponsored two youth whom he brought to the State House. These two students met the Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. Students were very impressed as this was their first opportunity to learn about careers in politics. Job Shadow Day for Lawrence Public School students took place April 14th. 25 Students from Lawrence High School main campus and the High School Learning Center and 10 employers participated in this activity.

Due to favorable outcomes in the DYS Bridging the Opportunity Gap that exceeded our goals, the Commonwealth Corporation increased our grant from \$90,000 to \$140,492.00. The increase allowed us to continue to providing quality services to DYS youth until the end of June.

Cristy said tha during from April to June they started learning more about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). 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. Cristy explained that WIOA requires a minimum of 75 percent of State and Local youth funding to be used for out-of-school youth. At least 20 percent of local Youth formula funds must be spent

on work experiences for in-school and out-of-school youth, such as summer and year-round employment, pre-apprenticeship, on-the-job training, or internships and job shadowing.

She also said that there are a few changes to Youth Eligibility. 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 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.

Although Youth Councils were no longer required under WIAO as of July 1, 2015 the Merrimack Valley WIB Youth Council was named the Merrimack Valley WIB Youth Committee and consists of a board chair, board members, and advisory members.

In May, the ValleyWorks Career Center held the first Lawrence High School (LHS) Youth Job fair on May 20th, 2015. This event was held at the LHS field house. This was an internal job fair for LHS students only, external job seekers were not invited to attend. A total of 63 students attended the resume workshops prior to the fair, 31 of which attended the job fair. The total attendance was 304 students and 23 employers.

Alongside YouthWorks for the second year we had the Lawrence Mayor Rivera's Summer Initiative. Mayor Rivera reached out to our past employer partners and Lawrence business owners and managers to remind them that youth employment provides their companies real benefits and positively impacts both them and our community. During the summer months our 2015 Youth Summer Employment activities placed more than 250 Lawrence, Haverhill and Methuen youth in jobs where they gained work experience, one of the two key ingredients for future success. Sixty-three area firms and non-profit organizations hired youth and provided them with supervision and mentoring.

Youth worked 25-30 hours per week for approximately 6 weeks, receiving a \$9.00/hour wage. Apart from work, youth completed a Work Based Learning Plan - the tool used to set and measure attainment of work readiness goals. They attended 15 hours of "Signal Success" Career Readiness workshops to prepare for work. Topics included workplace safety; dependability /professionalism; effective work relationships; mock interviews; and financial literacy - over 200 participants opened their first bank account! As a result of our Youth programming over 25 youth obtained unsubsidized employment.

Cristy reported that the WIB also partnered with the Greater Lawrence Community Boating Program as part of our MCEC Careers in Clean Energy program. The Greater Lawrence Community Boating coordinated, managed and paid up to eight (8) Lawrence Public School and other teachers who learned and then taught youth Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) information related to Clean Energy and the Merrimack River environment. About one hundred and twenty (120) youth were exposed to Clean Energy and 'Green' concepts.

In September, the Department of Career Services (DCS) conducted the systems monitoring for Fiscal Year 2015 WIA Title I Youth Program Systems to review the Federal and State funded Workforce Development Operations at the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Area. Upon completion of the review, our WIA Title I Youth Program Systems certification status remains certified.

On Friday October 2nd, as part of National Manufacturing Day, MVWIB and ValleyWorks staff held a Youth Tour in Manufacturing. 19 Connecting Activities program enrolled students from Haverhill High School's IT Pathways Academy in Haverhill, MA toured Magellan Aerospace in Haverhill and CASA Systems in Andover and Lawrence. The field trip was in celebration of Manufacturing Day, a national campaign to promote careers in the advanced manufacturing field.

As this New Year starts, staff continue to visit local high schools to help in school youth link with employers and workplace experiences that will reinforce the connection between learning and work. We also continue to collaborate and partner with local community based organizations, state and local institutions in our effort to outreach and recruit out of school youth for our various programs. Cristy said that staff are currently outreaching youth for the following programs: YouthWorks Year Round and WIOA. Staff are also continuing to reach out to companies interested in supporting internships, job shadows, and youth mentoring. These opportunities provide great learning opportunities for our programs participants. She said that although we strive to provide excellent career development services, we could not replicate the world of work and life experiences an employer can expose our youth to.

Cristy said that we are committed 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. During 2016 we hope to increase opportunities, particularly for those youth facing barriers to employment and invest in the important connection between education/career opportunities and employment. We expect a continued strong commitment to our partners, grantees, employers, and youth.

**V. Partner's Information**

Ellen Weinholt spoke about a flyer in English/Spanish which is included in the meeting packet for nominations for the Children's Champion Award Nomination 2016. This is an annual award to recognize an outstanding individual who has made significant contributions in the areas of child abuse prevention, intervention, treatment and/or child advocacy in the Merrimack Valley. The award ceremony will be held on Thursday, April 7, 2016 at 8:00 a.m. at the Methuen YMCA. Nominations should be returned to Ellen at the Methuen Housing Authority.

**VI. Other Business**

Francisco Brea reported that he has been appointed to serve on the site review committee for MVWIB and Career Center space and the first meeting was yesterday. He said that it was a preliminary meeting and they will convene again in two weeks.

Rafael said that apart from value for the money, the decision may come down to competing public goods.

**VII. Adjourn**

**Having no further business Francisco Brea made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mike Strem. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Mary Kivell  
Recorder