



YOUTH COUNCIL

MINUTES

**Wednesday, February 12, 2014
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
439 South Union Street
Lawrence, MA 01843**

Youth Council MEMBERS PRESENT:

Howard Allen, Michael Bevilacqua, Francisco Brea, Irene Chalek, Wilberto Mejias, Megan Shea, Linda Piergeorge, Tom Raiche, Lisa Remington, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

MVWIB Youth Council MEMBERS ABSENT:

Janet Allison, Marina Acosta, Beverly DeSalvo, Brad Howell, Tom Connors, Ed Fitzgerald, Superintendent John Lavoie, April Lyskowsky, Maria Miles, Steve Noroian, Barbara Richards, Donna Rivera, Michael Strem, Ed Warnshuis

MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Cristy Gomez, Corina Ruiz

OTHERS:

Joseph Bevilacqua, George Moriarty, Denise Perrault, Kelly Conlin

I. Call to Order and Introductions

A quorum being present, Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:45 a.m. and welcomed all. Introductions were made around the table.

II. Approval of January 8, 2014 Minutes

Cal then called for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2014 meeting.

Motion by Francisco Brea, seconded by Megan Shea, to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2014 Youth Council minutes as submitted. Motion passed.

Cal introduced MVWIB Chairman Joseph Bevilacqua. Joe began by thanking the members of this important committee.

He believes that workforce programs are trying to bring kids up to where they should be academically because too many of our kids because many of them did not learn as well as they should have in school.

He and Ralph were invited to a meeting with congressman Tierney and US Senator Elizabeth Warren. There was talk about the extension of unemployment benefits which we support and WIA reauthorization. Joe said that as Chair of the National Board Association, he will be in Washington next week talking about these very same issues.

Unfortunately, many of these issues are repeated year after year but one thing that is consistent is there's a real concern about how best to help those who need immediate assistance. We are looking for new and innovative ways to help people quickly get back into the workforce. What labor does with their apprenticeship programs may be a model for the job training system. One of the things we've talked about is providing businesses with the funds needed to put people on OJT programs so they can actually see that person working and hopefully pick them up at the end OJT cycle.

Joe continued by saying that many people are moving around the country today, that in many cases, graduate degrees, high school diplomas or GEDs may mean more if they come from one state than from another state. There's talk about having national measures and national credentials.

Joe emphasized how important it is to continue to help kids because without either an education or skills these kids cannot go anywhere. We need to make sure they speak English because unfortunately they cannot advance without having basic understanding of the language.

Joe said that there is a lot of discussion about those who are on long term unemployment. There's talk about whether or not they should be asked to consider volunteering somewhere. One of the reason this is coming up is because some people who have been unemployed for a long time are out of the cycle of having to report to work. This will be a good way to prepare them to get back to the workforce. He ended by saying that funding will never be the same as in the past. Reality is that we will continue to do more with less.

Rafael Abislaiman said he was grateful to attend the meeting with congressman Tierney and Senator Elizabeth Warren. Senator Warren was clearly interested in the subject and very supportive of congressman Tierney's efforts in active workforce development. Tierney is the only New England congressman who is on the labor sub-committee for the House and has been very influential in that category.

Tom Raiche added that last Thursday night Mayor Rivera attended the AFL-CIO council meeting and they talked about the apprentice program. Joe said that's important and

that we will be having Mayor Rivera as guest speaker at our quarterly meeting tomorrow, if it does not get postponed due to snow.

Denise Perrault said that there's a big push for English as a second language but her opinion is that these minority areas really need Spanish as a second language because people like her who are looking for jobs, are having a hard time because most jobs require you to be bilingual.

Cal added that under WIA, all WIB's are mandated to have a Youth Council. He asked Rafael to bring them up to speed on WIA reauthorization. Rafael briefly explained that mention of WIA reauthorization has been coming around since 1999. WIA was created in 1998 and it was refined in 2002, that being the last reauthorization. Right now Republicans and Democrats cannot come together about what the reauthorization should look like.

III. Special Presentation: George Moriarty, *Northern Essex Community College*

George Moriarty began his remarks by saying that NECC is trying to revitalize its internship program. The college hired a new person to head up that initiative. Unfortunately, she was not able to join us today. The college held a summit in October which was organized by Bill Heineman, VP for Academic Affairs. He brought together about 150 people who are in various advisory boards across the college and the one item that came up there was the need for experiential learning.

George continued by saying that more and more of our students need to get out into the workplace, need to understand how what they are learning in the academic field is connected to what they will learn and do at worksites. What he, Ashley and other people are trying to do is revitalize the internship program at the college. There are three parts to it: the first part is a new piece of software that allows students to enter or build their resumes and also allows employers to enter jobs and/or internships. The software package will be able to match the students' resumes with the jobs and/or internships and also provide the College with analytical information. The second part is how they are going to prepare students. This component prepares the student to have learning objectives when they are in the internship and also has training for employers. The third part is the outreach to employers and how to engage them. NECC will be developing a strategy and a plan on how to reach employers. He said that they are going to engage their advisory board members in the campaign for developing more internships and getting more employers. They might establish a goal for themselves to know what they aiming for. They will be looking for different ways to promote internships and to get more employers involved. Some may be shadowing, part time jobs or internships. George said there's a lot of cross referrals of opportunities with the college and the workforce investment board.

George summed up by saying how glad he was to have been invited to the meeting, not only to talk about the internship program the college is developing but to really think of ways we can all collaborate. NECCLink is the software package they are working with right now. Once they get the internships, information will be uploaded to the software. The college is open to collaborate in any way possible, supporting each other, doing some joint ventures where possible, or hosting events. They will be asking their occupational advisory board and some of their trustees to host some events where we can bring in a group of employers and talk about the internship program along with the MVWIB and the Youth Council.

Megan added that the NECCLink is free and that in the four weeks since they launched it, 16 employers and over 150 students have created accounts. Joe stressed the fact that right here in Lawrence you can get an Associates degree, a Bachelors degree and a Masters degree. Employers and people need to know that they can continue on right here at the Riverwalk in Lawrence where NECC, Cambridge College and Suffolk University are located. Irene said that anyone around the table can potentially offer an internship opportunity.

Cal said that the mission of the Youth Council is to prepare today's workforce ASAP and this is an excellent opportunity. He said that the NECCLink is very user friendly and shows how these youngsters can take ownership. As a retired HR, he knows that a lot of these youngster only know what they see on TV so when they go into the workforce they are clueless. We keep telling these kids that they have to learn the soft skills, be prepared and cannot repeatedly leave jobs in a bad way because they won't be able to get good references. Your work history follows you your entire career, it's not like your credit history.

Rafael Abislaiman asked George if the students have to be in an accredited NECC program to be an intern. George said that right now it is focused for accredited students at the college but they are going to try to expand that. He said that this past recession has kept many young people from getting the opportunity to get a job and learn things hands on. The College wants to get them out there and get job experiences so that they are better prepared. Rafael asked if the internships would be paid and/or unpaid. George said there will be both and that there's no industry preference. Irene said they are working to make sure students in different programs are ready to go out into an internship program and that Ashley is piloting the Business and Journalism program.

Megan referred everyone to the paper she had passed around which is the actual internship agreement form. All parties have expectations and responsibilities. The faculty, the school, the student and the employer are all part of the team to help a student succeed and it's a credit bearing activity so there's a formal curriculum, expectations and outcomes. There are 12 students in the pilot program which are getting credits.

Rafael asked if they have to pay for the internship. Megan said yes, for the credit hour. That's why we want them to be paid internships so it can offset the student's expense. Students have to be recommended by a faculty and need to have a resume to be enrolled.

George then briefly talked about a program they are part of which is funded by Commonwealth Corporation through the WCTF, in collaboration with four WIB regions; North Shore, Greater Lowell, Metro North and the Merrimac Valley and three Community Colleges; North Shore, Middlesex and NECC and various vocational schools. Which the MVWIB and other WIBs put together. There are going to be 70 people trained in CNC machining and Electronics occupations.

This effort is in response to the growing need we hear for people to get into the manufacturing jobs. Many people in the manufacturing jobs are older and retiring in the next years. Manufacturing is still a very strong part of our economy although it's being threatened by the fact that older workers are leaving.

The program has three cycles. The first was launched in October at Middlesex Community College where they are training 24 people. The Merrimack Valley will be the second cycle and will also be training 24 people; 12 in electronics tract and 12 in machining tract. The third cycle will be in the fall at North Shore with roughly the same amount of people. The second cycle will be launched in late April. They are doing outreach and recruitment right now and will be having two informational sessions, Tuesday the 18th and Thursday the 20th at NECC- Riverwalk campus.

George said that Lisa and Chili have also been part of the program and the flyer that we handed out talks about the information sessions. This is an intense program so we are trying to get people that are qualified. There is a month of foundational skills at NECC to make sure everyone is brought up to the level that they need to be at in order to go through the training. The machining tract will be held at Whittier Regional Vocational in Haverhill and the electronics tract will be held at Greater Lawrence Tech School in Andover.

The training will be four days a week. There are over 500 hours worth of training when you put together the foundation piece and the machining or electronics parts. People really have to be committed but when they get out there, a job will be there. We've had a lot of employers sign to the grant who indicated that there will be jobs available to people. NECC has been running a small pilot with 8-10 people and it has been very successful.

This is a big program and we are very excited about it. ValleyWorks is helping out with the recruiting, testing and enrolling. NECC plans to continue to do this program after the grant ends. The president of the college would like to do an Advance

Manufacturing Degree so I think we are going to learn from this and have an Associates Degree program coming off of this.

Joe added that we have community colleges that not only builds programs for education but also builds partnerships with workforce development.

Ellen Weinhold asked what the cost for the training is. Gorge said the grant pays for a certain amount of people but that the ValleyWorks Career Center will be using MVWIB ITAs to pay for other people so basically everyone that gets enrolled will be covered. They also have to meet eligibility requirements and pass testing. We are sending information about this training to employers in case they have employees who need to upgrade their skills. Megan said than an exciting part of this program is that trainees may be able to get 12 credit hours of college credit; but it's not finalized.

Joe said that the MVCC is doing two unique and free events; Access to Capital and Access to Jobs.

Rafael said that people who go in CNC have an average wage in Massachusetts of \$67,000 dollars. Manufacturing is returning to the United States and there's a considerable interest in Massachusetts to stay competitive in manufacturing. Joe added that the WIB and the Youth Council are right on track because we are feeding manufacturing jobs. Rafael said that he and George went to a meeting at Southwick and they made it clear that one of the things that attracts them to this area are immigrants because they know about tailoring but also have a strong work ethic.

Joe added that labor force is critical for any business and any opportunity. Cal said if Megan and Irene can give us updates on the program moving forward. Megan said that Ashley can come to the April meeting and talk about NECC link. Cal said that would be great and maybe we can have the next meeting at NECC Riverwalk.

IV. PARTNER'S INFORMATION

Cristy said they already have the Youthworks Year Round money to serve older youth, 17 to 21 from Lawrence, Haverhill and Methuen. To let her know of any youth that is looking for employment. They will provide 20 hours of foundation skills. The next orientation will be held at VWCC next Wednesday, February 19th at 9:45am. She said that in the handouts there's a flyer that has the application attached and that they will go over the program requirements and documentation so they can have a better understanding of what they need. If youth have any questions or to register, they should contact Yeang at 978-722-7062.

Cal asked how many youth are we trying to enroll. Cristy said we have year-round money for another 48 youth and VWCC is doing the outreach. Cal asked if we are reaching out to the high schools and guidance counselors. Cristy said that the outreach for the ISY program is complete and that 17 youth are scheduled to start at Haverhill

High School today. We have already completed 17 youth for Lawrence High School; those students are working and are almost completing the program; and 7 kids from HHLA are going to start after February vacation.

Rafael added that out of school youth can be either HS graduates or HS dropouts. Cal asked what our youth unemployment is in the Valley. Rafael said it's about 30% in Lawrence, which happens to have the highest or second highest percentage of so called disconnected youth in the entire state. The only one that comes close is Springfield who sometimes surpasses us. When referring to disconnected youth, we are talking about youth who are neither working nor going to school who are between the ages of 16 and 21. This is a great problem because we've had about 5 years of this and if you don't work and acquire these habits, it's very difficult to get them later on.

Cal asked how our summer work program looks and Rafael said it looks good because we are guaranteed roughly level funding from last year with the strong possibility of an increase.

Howard Allen said that he and Cristy attended a STEM meeting which comprised all of the STEM groups in Massachusetts. One of the pieces that came out is a STEM competition amongst elementary schools. He was invited to participate in the next competition so he will give the youth council more information at the next meeting. He said that this morning he spoke to The Birches Academy Charter School head of school for grades 1-8 and she is very interested to take a look at this.

Cristy said that the MVWIB partnered with the Family Development Charter School through a SimCity engineering-type program. Students from the 4th, 5th and 6th grade are creating a future city and will be presenting it on the 25th at 4:30pm at the FDCA. Everyone is welcome to attend. They will have to explain the reasoning behind the city they designed and created. Rafael explained that SimCity is a software program where you build a city from scratch. You have to do it right and take various factors into account to have it grow. That's what these kids have done and also created physical models that underline STEM concepts.

Francisco asked if it's possible to invite someone from the Mass AFL-CIO to attend a youth council meeting and give an overview of their apprenticeship program. Cal said that would be great and we will have it on the next agenda. Howard added that GLTS also has a union representative that does internships too.

Irene said that they are piloting a Basic English class which is different from their grant funded ESL class. They were able to develop a curriculum through collaborative work between the grants and academic ESL. They started the program because the academic ESL are heightening the requirements for folk receiving Pell Grants and reducing the time people can receive them. The college does not want people to spend as much time in ESL or remedial courses because they will not have Pell Grants for their

academic courses. This pilot serves as a feeder into academic ESL at a higher level. It's not a free course; it costs \$235.00, which is less than a 3 or 4 credit course. It's a full semester course and right now they have about a half dozen students. The plan is to offer it again in the summer and fall. The course is offered evenings at the Lawrence campus.

Lisa Remington said that the EPA program will have 3 cycles for people 18 and older. Its grant funded training and GroundWork Lawrence is going to working on that. Eligible people need to be unemployed or underemployed and it's a very open definition. They are targeting people from the Merrimack Valley area and there are 20 people per cycle. The first cycle dates are March 10th through April 11th; second cycle will be May 3rd through June 5th; and third cycle will be July 7th through August 8th. They are having certifications in Asbestos, De-leading, Hazwoper, OSHA 40 and 10, sustainable sites, erosion and sediment and recycling. There will be weekly information sessions at GWL.

Lisa also mentioned the two ISY high school programs starting. We've 18 seniors at the Haverhill HS that will be working on internships and career options. Their objective is to graduate from HS and either get a job, do skills training and then get a job, or go directly to college after high school. Cal asked what types of internships and Lisa said a variety. We have a second program that will start the week after then at the Methuen HS for 10 at-risk kids. They will be working with LARE to obtain customer service certification and healthcare certifications and digital information. They are going to bring them to colleges and expose them. They have the same outcomes as the Haverhill HS program.

Denise said she is the business community liaison for Job Corps. She will be working on getting funding through congress and the chamber of commerce in Worcester.

Wilfredo Mejia said that Job Corps is going well and that they are looking for female applicants.

Tom Raiche asked Cal to tell them a little about Youth Venture. Cal said that a group of kids from Lowell worked on a program that gave them up to \$1,500 dollars by putting together a business venture. Most of the youngsters were freshman and they came up with a business plan venture that can relate back to the community. It was pretty impressive and it will be coming to Lawrence soon. Tom added how impressed he was with one of the groups that did Arts for Abuse and House for Hope.

Ellen Weinhold said she received her funding but got a 3% cut. The families that she's working with are doing well. They have one that is looking to graduate soon and just pre-qualified for \$150,000. It's not much but they would like to get her into Bread and Roses or Habitat for Humanity.

V. Adjournment

Having no further business made a motion to adjourn was made by Ellen Weinhold seconded by Francisco Brea. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Corina Ruiz

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Recorder