



# **YOUTH COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES**

**Wednesday, June 10, 2015  
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board  
439 South Union – Suite 102  
Lawrence, MA 01843**

### **Youth Council MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Francisco Brea, Brad Howell, Wilberto Mejias Tom Raiche, Lisa Remington, Michael Strem, Ed Warnshuis, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

### **MVWIB Youth Council MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Michael Bevilacqua, Irene Chalek, Janet Allison, Beverly DeSalvo, Ed Fitzgerald, Superintendent John Lavoie, Maria Miles, Sonia Morales, Steve Noroian, Linda Piergeorge, Donna Rivera

### **MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:**

Rafael Abislaiman, Cristy Gomez, Mary Kivell, Brian Norris

**OTHERS:** Howard Allen, Kathy Howe for Supt. Lavoie, Elsa Martinez-Pimentel, Jackie Romero

### **I. Call to Order and Introductions**

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

### **II. Approval of the April 8, 2015 Minutes**

Youth Council Chairman Cal Williams called for a motion to approve the minutes of the April 8, 2015 meeting.

**Motion by Lisa Remington, seconded by Francisco Brea, to approve the minutes of the April 8, 2015 Youth Council minutes as submitted. Motion passed.**

### **III. WIOA and Youth Council Update**

Rafael Abislaiman spoke about the role of the Youth Council under WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act) where it no longer has a statutory purpose. He

hoped that members would continue to meet bi-monthly to advise the Board. The Planning Committee acted to change the Council's name to the MVWIB Youth Committee in accordance to WIOA beginning July 1, 2015. The Board will now oversee youth-related procurements and outcomes alongside the CEO and board members will be the voting members of the Youth Committee. Other members will participate and discuss issues in an advisory role.

Rafael said that the Commonwealth has not entirely articulated their interpretation of WIOA youth programming under the new law and the federal government has provided guidelines that allow for a number of interpretations. Cal asked how participants would be appointed and Rafael said that the Youth Committee would most likely be populated as it is now. Only its role and who votes was changed. The Board will keep committee members updated and the Board is interested in keeping current youth council participants onboard.

April Lyszkowsky mentioned that US DOL has asked people to submit recommendations on WIOA. She thinks that major decisions will still be decided at the federal level.

Rafael said that the Youth Council had a specific role under WIA (Workforce Investment Act). It, for example, made funding recommendations for Board approval or disapproval. The Board could not appropriate training funds without a Council recommendation. That has now changed.

WIOA consolidates a number of funding streams in an attempt to make workforce development more streamlined and less duplicative. In some ways, it has put more people in a funding stream that hasn't widened enough to keep up with the number of people in it.

Cal asked if there is still talk of WIB consolidation. Rafael said that remains a possibility but that it is not at the top of anyone's agenda. There may be significant changes because some people at the State think that Massachusetts doesn't have its own workforce system but instead just does what's required by the federal government. The Governor and his Secretaries may look at creating a more customized Massachusetts system.

Francisco Brea said that he personally believes there are going to be a lot of changes.

Rafael said that the new WIOA again mandates that we be responsive to employer needs while also serving poor and disabled people with barriers to employment. Finding the right balance between those two goals might mean change. We have three funding streams: youth, adult, and dislocated workers. The dislocated worker one deals with more employable people. The other two focus on poor or low income people with barriers.

Mike Strem wondered if we can provide services to folks who are undereducated and older. Rafael said that we've historically had programs that include remediation and still do. We've restricted youth eligibility to those with a high school diploma or GED/HiSet because we didn't want to create the impression that we are an alternative to high school graduation. We also don't provide training to adults who score below an average grade of 6.9 grade on TABE or Career 101 tests. We still offer remediation to bring kids and adults up to 9<sup>th</sup> grade academic ability even if they have a high school diploma or GED.

Rafael said that we may want to look at greater flexibility for people who have a language barrier but reminded members that we have little funding compared to public school systems. From his perspective, our funding would ideally be used to help low income and poor people take steps up between high school and an Associate's Degree. Everyone shouldn't be going to college full-time. We could help youth and adults get certificates and credits while they work. If they are interested, they could first get an Associates and then a BA or BS.

Mike Strem suggested reaching out to employers to offer English classes and other related courses to their employees. Rafael agreed and spoke about a manufacturing proposal that was submitted for an apprenticeship program. If successful, it would help incumbent staff gain skills and move up company ladders and also allow us to help companies fill their entry level positions.

Rafael noted that employees nowadays stay at companies for just a while and sometimes employers are reluctant to provide training fund matches because of staff turn-over. Ed Warnshuis said that employers need to compete for good employees and pay better and provide better working conditions so that people won't leave.

Lisa Remington said that 20% of WIOA provides for work-based training program development with employers. Rafael said that Massachusetts employers frequently express their concern that high salaries and costs are going to price them out of global competition.

He continued by stating Massachusetts is the cream of the crop for K-12 student performance but our region has cultural and poverty issues that impact certain groups. The number of jobs for poor people may not grow because of robots and technology taking over repetitive human tasks. Although technological makes the future unpredictable, he supports role modeling as an important tool in raising people up by imbuing basic soft skills. He advises dedicating training dollars to poor people who can use training to raise themselves up and be role models for other people in their neighborhoods.

Lisa Remington said that youth definitely benefit from long term mentoring and leadership and she would like ideas as to where to make referrals. Ed Warnshuis

mentioned his mentoring program Stand and Deliver and Elisa Martinez said that Lawrence High School has put together a directory of providers which is very helpful and which she will share with Cristy.

Lisa mentioned that she is seeing a bump in electrical helpers who are getting hired right out of high school and in truck driver hires because drivers are retiring. April asked about tracking job placements and Lisa said most of the information is outdated so she depends on real time MOSES data and seeing what is happening at training vendor sites.

Cal thought that colleges track employment data and Rafael said they normally only track academic outcomes and not graduate jobs gained. He said that in 2012 80% of high school graduates went to college but only about 35% will graduate with any sort of degree. He wondered how long families and our government will be able to afford the college costs of the 45% who do not get a degree.

Cal asked about emailing job postings and Rafael said that we that do that weekly but that some people ask whether career centers may be better constituted with more business service representatives and fewer counselors. Ed Warnshuis mentioned that Raytheon did a survey and 80% of their factory workers are over 50 and suggested going to the executive at human resources and offering to design a program to prep employees.

Brian Norris, NAMC Marketing Manager, said that he is able to get into small companies with an average of 20 employees but they are often looking for one person to hire every once in a while. The NAMC program is trying to match recent training graduates to CNC machinist positions and electronic positions mostly at small and medium companies. Large companies have so far been uninterested because they normally pay more and will get experienced workers from other companies.

#### **IV. Guest Speaker – Michael Fiato, Headmaster, Lawrence High School**

Cal Williams then called on our guest speaker Michael Fiato, Headmaster of Lawrence High School. Mr. Fiato said that there is a lot happening in the Lawrence Public School System and Lawrence High School. He said that he would speak about the district and then about the high school.

Headmaster Fiato mentioned that Holyoke Public Schools have recently been put in receivership and although Lawrence has been making significant progress the receivership has been extended for three years.

Mr. Fiato said that key initiatives are fostering high performing, autonomous schools in keeping with federal regulations; reducing central office staffing and shifting resources to schools, expanding school day for grades 1-9; adding vacation and summer learning opportunities including enrichment and remediation; negotiating a new teachers

contract and restructuring teacher evaluations. They are creating new teacher leadership opportunities such as a seat in the Superintendent's cabinet. Mike said that reading and math scores are up. The model the system is using is open architecture, each school program is tailored to the needs of its students. Those that earn autonomy get it and those who don't get support. He said that they are pleased with the increase in standardized testing scores and mentioned that they also need to deal with social issues while showing improvement. They still need to graduate more students in four years. Mike said that the graduation rate is above 80% with 750 students graduating last week. It will reach 800 with the summer graduates. He said that they are using multiple avenues for success such as charter school best practices and a union run school.

Mr. Fiato explained that the elementary and middle schools have made significant progress with some at Level 5 at state takeover now rising to Level 3 and better. In some cases they've reached Level 1. He mentioned enrichment activities at the Frost and Weatherbee and how students are participating at the Boys and Girls Club.

Mike said that the high school graduation rate is up and the dropout rate is down. He then spoke about the changes to Lawrence High School. He said that all incoming Freshman will attend a 9<sup>th</sup> grade academy to transition from 8<sup>th</sup> grade. 9<sup>th</sup> grade is where students often get into difficulty. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade academy will have 3 cohorts of 100. Students will build a foundation and learn how to take notes and self-regulate. There will be an accelerated program – Abbot Lawrence Academy will accept only 100 students. Entrance is exam based and students must do an essay and have a teacher recommendation. The Academy will save some parents a lot of money because they won't need to send their kids to private schools.

During 2015-16 school years all students in grades 10-12 will attend the separate BMF, HHS, HLD, MST, PFA schools. Beginning in the fall of 2016 the plan is to integrate the separate schools and create a comprehensive LHS Campus with small learning communities.

Mr. Fiato said that there will be high quality enrichment during the school day to create additional opportunities and to foster school spirit such as a debate team, ROTC, dance, etc. Rafael asked if there is a shop program and Mike said no. They don't have the facilities but do have an after school robotics building group. He said that they would be happy to partner with the vocational school and Kathy Howe, GLTS Community Services Director, said they would be happy to partner with LHS. Mike said that they should get together and talk about ways to partner. Mike also said that they are introducing a US2 curriculum and piloting a history of Lawrence course.

Mike also said they have a wonderful partnership with NECC and Elsa Martinez with uAspire is working with students. Kathy Howe asked if students have career plans in 9<sup>th</sup>

grade. Mike said that students are provided career inventories and every student visits a college.

In spite of the tremendous gains the State has continued receivership for the three more years because they want to have sustainability. Elsa Martinez said that even with the changing model she will continue to work with LHS and (GLTS - 1 day per week). Jackie Romero asked whether students who don't pass the MCAS and receive a certificate of completion had an opportunity to get their GED. Mike Fiato said that LHS offers opportunities to come back in the summer and take the MCAS for their high school diploma. Wilfredo Mejias also said that Job Corps partners with Ren Foster online for youth who come to Job Corps and need to complete their high school diploma on line while attending Job Corps.

There was also discussion on the value of mentoring and Mike relayed that Rep. Diana DiZoglio organized a Career Day for females with several positive role models participating. The Stand and Deliver program at LHS was also mentioned.

Cal then asked Mike Fiato to come back again with updates and offered any help we can give.

#### **V. Youth Program Update**

In the interest of time the Youth Programs Manager's report will be emailed.

#### **VI. Partner's Information/Other Business**

Brad Howell referenced an article on disabilities that was included in the meeting packets and wondered if it was on the agenda for discussion. Rafael said that the article was included for informational purposes but noted that there is considerable interest in WIOA explicitly stated as part of a long list of what we have to do to provide services. Rafael cited a separate list of vocational and disability related entities and agencies in this area and stated that they have considerably larger budgets than the MVWIB. Cal suggested putting this on the agenda for the next meeting.

Francisco Brea then mentioned a WTF business forum for employers that will be held on June 25, 2015 at Lawrence City Hall and asked that the flyer be forwarded.

#### **VI. Adjournment**

**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