



YOUTH COMMITTEE

MINUTES

**Wednesday, September 14, 2016
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
439 South Union – Suite 102
Lawrence, MA 01843**

Youth Committee MEMBERS PRESENT:

Francisco Brea, Irene Chalek, April Lyszkowsky, Tom Raiche, Lisa Remington, Michael Strem, Ed Warnshuis, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

MVWIB Youth Committee MEMBERS ABSENT:

Howard Allen, Michael Bevilacqua, Kelly Conlin, Superintendent John Lavoie, Beverly DeSalvo, Brad Howell, Sonia Morales, Linda Piergeorge, Donna Rivera, David Tagliaferri

MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Mary Kivell, Corina Ruiz

OTHERS: Jessy Abramson, Lisa Remington, Elizabeth Bennett for Supt. Lavoie

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Introductions were made around the table. A quorum being present Mike Strem called the meeting to order at 11:40 while awaiting Cal Williams arrival as he was delayed in Boston.

II. Approval of April 13, 2016 Minutes

Mike Strem called for a motion to approve the April 13, 2016 minutes.

Motion by Ellen Weinhold, seconded by Francisco Brea, to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2016 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

III. Guest Speaker

Rafael Abislaiman introduced Jessy Abramson, Student Career Specialist Connecting Activities, who has stood in for Cristy Gomez during her absence and has done a fine job this year with the summer program.

Jessy reported on the 2016 Summer Youthworks Employment Program. She said that this has been a very positive experience and that Cristy had set up the program a month earlier this year. She began the paperwork and front loaded the hours for youth. Jessy said that 273 of the 278 youth who started the program, successfully completed the required 15 hours of comprehensive career readiness and exploration workshops following the Signal Success curriculum. The emphasis this year was on new youth.

Jessy continued stating that youth received Financial Literacy training as part of the 15 hours of workshops and opened over 230 new bank accounts in partnership with NESB. Jessy reported that they met the enrollment goal of 268 of the youth who completed the required workshops and were job matched. There were 178 from Lawrence of 175 planned; 68 from Haverhill of 67 planned; and 22 from Methuen of 26 planned. There were 88 employers and youth were placed according to their interests. Ed Warsnhuis requested a list of the employers and Jessy said she would make that available. Business Service Reps Susan Ingham and Chuck Masaitis worked to get employers on board. Youth are ages 14-21 and often transportation is an issue if the employers are not in the area. Jessy said that youth were placed in 68 employer worksites and some of the new employers are Suenos Basketball, US Taekwondo Academy, Top-Notch Scholars, Phoenix Academy and Lawrence General Hospital.

April Lyskowsky asked how many at risk youth were served and Jessy stated that they met 75% of plan with 40 at risk youth served. Youth were placed in new programs such as GroundWorks and Food for the World. Rafael also said that other youth were hired as part of the Mayor's Initiative and paid separately with private funds. Mayor's Initiative Partners include the Greater Lawrence Boating Program, the Youth Development Organization, Lawrence Public Schools, the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club as well as Lawrence General Hospital (LGH). Jessy said that she had connected with LGH through Job Shadow Day and the youth worked there all summer. Jessy then referenced an article in the Eagle Tribune that spoke about the positive partnership with the Essex Art Center and Food for the World.

Francisco Brea wondered what the youth did at Food for the World and Jessy said some did food packaging and others did some grant writing. At LGH youth worked on patient accounts. Cal asked if we would be doing something to recognize the employers and Rafael said that he would mention it to the Mayor. Jessy also said that it was very validating to see the youth who participated in the past taking on leadership roles.

Rafael also mentioned that we would like to increase the private sector participation. Cal then congratulated Jessy and the staff for a job well done.

IV. Programs Update, Partner's Information, & WIOA Update

Rafael Abislaiman said that we had three fine people at the career center helping out with the summer youth program this year and they did a fine job. We will be following up with the kids who are not employed or in college and encouraging them to become career center members and help them get jobs. One negative is that the Business Service Representative (BSR) who has always been a big help with the program will retire at the end of the month. There are now two people employed in the youth department as a third one was let go. We wish them well and they will be looking for someone more suitable for the youth manager job and a replacement for an excellent BSR.

Rafael said that WIOA youth enrollment has repeatedly been on the low side. Last April we decided to put out an RFP for a group training program for out of school (disengaged) youth. The successful vendor (LARE) was chosen and LARE staff are now offering a program with Hi-Set and electronics training for 10 individuals. They currently have 2 enrolled and are working on filling the program.

Rafael said that only Springfield and Holyoke have more disengaged youth than Lawrence and we should find ways to recruit more of them. He said that many of today's youth lack role models. Ed Warnshuis spoke about Lawrence High School's Peer Mentoring Program and how important it is for students taking responsibility for those who are not doing well.

Francisco said that kids are not dumb or stupid. Sometimes it is the way society treats them that makes them go wrong. He referenced a successful union apprenticeship program where 15 youth, given the opportunity to succeed, have recently graduated. Tom Raiche said that they go on to good jobs that require discipline and respect.

Liz Bennet said that both comprehensive and vocational educational paths should foster the idea of education as tied to careers. Learning builds employability skills. She said that Greater Lawrence is looking at ways to increase vocational school access after regular school hours and during the evening.

April Lyskowsky asked how many homeless, DCF or DYS youth were served during Summer YouthWorks. Jessy said the target was 53, 47 applied, and 40 were served. Under the BOG grant 12 of 16 were served. Lisa Remington handed out a flyer on the LARE Electronic Technician, with remedial Hi-set, program that is Monday through Friday from 8:30 – 2:30 pm. She said that there will be an information session on September 29th and noted that there will be information in the Eagle Tribune and RUMBO. This program has 4 weeks of work experience with 3 of those weeks including contract subsidized internship salaries. Francisco also mentioned El Mundo and the radio as ways of outreach salaries.

April spoke about young people who are not eligible for the Voke or NECC and have to fall back on Lawrence High School (LHS) where some have spent 3 years as a freshman and often fall into risky behaviors. There was discussion on the curriculum being academic and the need for additional vocational programs. April said that smaller classrooms with mentors and apprenticeships would suit these youth better. Lisa Remington said that what is needed is partnerships when we are preparing RFPs for out of school youth that combine the Hi-set along with a vocational or apprenticeship part. Lisa said that there is a lot of interest in the trades.

Ed said that the fastest work career field is right here with the Merrimack Valley being the delivery center of the health care field. There are certificate programs for sleep technicians and phlebotomists. We need more males and need to expand credentialing and associate degree opportunities in high school. Ed reported that LHS now has a Level 1 school and there are a lot of changes going on at the high school. There are 13,000 students in the LPS with 4,000 at the high school. He said that he would like to report on those changes at the next meeting and it was agreed that he would be the guest speaker at the next Youth Committee meeting in November.

Rafael mentioned that the MVWIB had recently submitted an America's Promise proposal to the U.S. Department of Labor to help more low income people and minorities graduate from Northern Essex and North Shore Community Colleges with health care related Associates Degrees or Health Industry recognized Credentials.

Rafael Abislaiman also spoke about a K-3 STEM initiative that Strem Chemicals sponsors at Newburyport public schools as an early learning model that works. Rafael then referred the Committee to a space diagram that was distributed for the new Career Center and MVWIB offices at 255 Essex Street in Lawrence. He said that includes a space for youth recruitment on the fourth floor.

V. Other Business

There was no other business.

VII Adjourn

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Mary Kivell
Recorder