



# **YOUTH COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES**

**Wednesday, March 3, 2010**

**11:30 a.m.**

**Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board**

**439 South Union Street**

**Lawrence, MA 01843**

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

Howard Allen, Christine Bradshaw, Kristine Blum, Irene Chalek, Beverly DeSalvo, Lisa Coy, Brad Howell, Megan Shea, Linda Piergeorge, Michael Strem, Cal Williams

### **MVWVIB Youth Council MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Janet Allison, Tom Casey, Ed Fitzgerald, Linda Cote, Howard Flagler, Jason Pimentel, Bill Blanchette, Gina Bozek, Bob Mazzone, Steve O'Brien, Barbara Richards, Vinnie Ouellette, Tricia Snow, Marianne Vesey, Ed Warnshuis

### **GUESTS PRESENT:**

Amy Weatherbee, Odanis Hernandez

### **MVWVIB STAFF PRESENT:**

Mary Kivell, Fred Carberry, Elizabeth Kirk, Deborah Andrews

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

Youth Council Chairman Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m. Introductions were made around the table.

### **II. Approval of January 13, 2010 Minutes**

Cal then called for a motion on the minutes of the January 13, 2010 meeting.

**Motion by Howard Allen seconded by Linda Piergeorge to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2010 Youth Council meeting as submitted. Motion passed.**

### **III. Program Updates**

#### ***a. ARRA***

Deborah Andrews went over the Summer Youth Jobs Update for the three summer programs for the week ending 02/26/10. There were a total of 784 youth enrollments and 88.4% of worksites with youth. ARRA funds are close to 93% expended; YouthWorks is closed out at 85.6%; and the EOPSS Byrne Fund grant is at 87.6%.

Lisa Coy said that there are some kids still working and that the Byrne Grant in Methuen will finish March 12<sup>th</sup>. ARRA has 50 kids still working and there remains enough funding left for some kids who started late to work one more week.

Deborah said that she is going to the NAWB Conference in Washington, DC and has appointments with Senators Kerry and Brown to advocate for summer jobs funding as well as other youth initiatives.

Mike Strem asked about the funding sources for the youth grants and Lisa said that ARRA and Byrne funds are federal and Youth Works is state. She said that we are looking at a reduction from 700 youth last summer to only 100 this year due to funding cuts.

Deborah then referenced a handout of the recent press release on the statewide dropout rate which has fallen below 3%. She noted that Hispanic students and several urban districts show some impressive gains. Lawrence had 80 fewer students drop out which is a 2.7% improvement and Haverhill had 47 fewer students drop out, a 2% improvement.

Mike Strem asked if there were any virtual programs for dropouts to pursue and Christine Bradshaw said that there are no schools she is aware of offering virtual courses, only some evening classes. She said that it is difficult to fit the individual needs and some classes are private pay and full.

Lisa Coy mentioned a Credit Recovery Program in Boston through the Private Industry Council. Mike Strem opined that virtual courses could be less costly and Howard Allen said that many youth who have dropped out are not self directed.

Fred Carberry said that the Workforce Solutions Act looked at dropout prevention and dropout recovery. If passed, it will require school districts over 4% to work with local WIBs to establish a strategy for a connection between education and career development.

Howard Allen talked about the old model where students would complete a 5<sup>th</sup> year and go to prep school. In the last 20 years that student could get a job, today they can't.

Fred said that he is looking at the possibility of replicating the model at the Boston PIC where they have two employees going in to the neighborhoods and connecting with these youth. We could begin with one staff person and perhaps use Connecting Activities funds. Lisa said that she thought that the school

department had helped fund the Boston initiative and Linda Piergeorge said that most schools are also cutting back.

Deborah then said that the Governor has a STEM Advisory Council out of the Lt. Governor's Office and she has been asked to participate on the Infrastructure Subcommittee on Grants, Strategic Partnerships and Sustainability.

Deborah reported that Job Shadow day was a success, with 60 youth from Lawrence and Haverhill participating. She said that the Career Center did a wonderful job getting employers. She also said that the MVWIB newsletter would be going out electronically on Friday.

Lisa Coy said that there was a wide variety of businesses that participated in Job Shadow Day. She said that they asked students where their interests lie and then tried to match them with the employers. There were participants in healthcare, immigration, probation, fire and police, a web design company and others.

Deborah then said that we have a new partner for our teacher externships. We do three small internships during school vacation week at a business and have worked with NECC and Cambridge College in the past. Due to staffing cuts at the colleges, Howard Allen has agreed to work with us through the externship process. We are looking for applications by March 24<sup>th</sup> and plan to choose three teachers for April vacation week. YC members are invited to participate in the selection process.

Howard Allen said that we are looking to make the program more robust to address the disconnect between industry and the classroom.

Mike Strem said we should try to strive for a longer internship.

Fred Carberry referenced an externship through Raytheon where they developed a relationship and Raytheon came into the classroom and did a power point, which helps strengthen and sustain the partnership, benefitting the students. We are looking to replicate NSWIB's externship program in the near future, which lasts for about 5 weeks in the summer.

#### **IV. Review WIA OSY Proposal Review**

Deborah said that everyone needs to sign a conflict of interest form in order to review the proposals, which everyone did.

Deborah then referred to the outline of the procurement process and asked if anyone had questions. Hearing none she stated that the YC is in receipt of the Average Rating Sheet and Comments Sheet from the Proposal Review Committee. Once we review the information and make a recommendation, it will be forwarded to the MVWIB Planning Committee for review and approval on March 8<sup>th</sup>.

Deborah said that we were disappointed to only receive six proposals and said that strong employer collaboration is very important. We did a lot of technical assistance.

The first proposal is from Boston Career Institute for Certified Registered Central Technical & GED Prep for 36 slots @ \$5,803.61 each, for a total of \$208,930.00. This occupational skills area is in the healthcare field and results in a nationally recognized credential. The program has a weak education component; employer connections are limited, with no local employers and no identified labor market need. The work experience is lengthy and costly and not in line with stepping stone methodology. The average staff rating was 46 and the program is not recommended for funding. A concern of reviews was also that the training and the jobs were identified as being in Boston, not accessible to MV youth.

The second is Boston Career Institute for Hydroponic Farming & Adult Basic Education for 12 slots @ \$9,510.12 for a total of \$114,121.40. The vendor has experience in the provision of occupational skills, yet no experience with youth populations was articulated. The industry is neither critical nor emerging and there is no credentialing as required by the RFP. There is only one employer named and it is not clear if there is a labor market for these jobs. The length of work experience is inappropriate and the program is over-staffed for only 12 participants. This program is not recommended for funding with an average staff rating of 24.

Deborah explained that the next program is from Everblue Energy for Energy Efficiency Training for 24 slots @ \$3,030.98 for a total of \$72,743.73. This program presents a "green" occupational opportunity, with the occupational skills resulting in a nationally recognized credential, BPI Building Analyst/Energy Auditor. There is an education component geared more to light math & reading remediation, (initially only 20 hours), as the entrance criteria is high (9<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math). The occupational skills component is only 1 wk @ thirty hours, and there the work experience length is seven weeks. The employers cited are not local, but labor market need exists for these positions. Budgetarily, there was a concern about a \$1,500 per student training cost, yet there was also instructors' costs built into the budget (and instructors wage rate was very high). The average staff rating was 34 and this program is not recommended for funding.

The next program is LARE Training Center for Education and EMT Basic Training for 12 slots @ \$5,567.83 for a total of \$65,614.00. There is a strong organizational background of provider, both with occupational skills training and with youth population. All required components are presented in this design, and there is a partnership with Action Ambulance. This is a new occupational area for youth programming. There were strong employer connections presented, including commitments to hire. An Employer Advisory Board is included in the design, which is a good plan and may help recruitment. There

are concerns as to accessibility (and recruitment) i.e. the need for a Driver's License, no history of Drug & Alcohol, clean CORI, and ability to lift 125 lbs. Concerns that would need clarification: There would need to be a breakdown provided of the Action Ambulance costs for review for reasonableness (only a lump sum amount was provided); there is a question on how the initial assessment will be done (such as lifting 125 lbs); there are staffing issues/concerns – job developer charges/hours were high and the program had a guarantee from one employer for hiring all of the program completers (who meet their hiring guidelines) and another employer wanting graduates; concerns on overlaps in staff (LARE and partner); licensing of staff conducting the educational remediation activities; question on ride-alongs (insurance/liability) and overview issues with space, student conduct and attendance policies and communication with the VWCC staff. This program received an average staff rating of 77 and is recommended for funding with **10** slots pending clarifications.

Deborah continued with the next proposal also from LARE Training Center for Education & Food Service Training for 24 slots @ \$5,601.50 for a total of \$136,436.00. Once again, a strong organizational background of provider, both with occupational skills training and with youth population. The program presented has all required components; and is a good partnership with Greater Lawrence Technical School. The Employer survey identified a number of jobs, however there were concerns about the reasonableness of the cost per participant. The concern was also raised as to whether this would be value-added training. Concerns that would need clarification: There would need to be a breakdown provided of the GLTS costs for review for reasonableness (only a lump sum amount was provided); we would need information on GLTS' performance and placement history in this industry/occupational area; there is a question on the need for a CORI and the Health Testing (how is this to be done in an assessment); there are staffing issues/concerns – job developer charges/hours were high; concerns on overlaps in staff (LARE and GLTS); licensing of staff conducting the educational remediation activities; and overview issues with space, student conduct and attendance policies and communication with the VWCC staff. Would require clear guidelines on allowable placements (training related) defined by the MVWIB. The average staff rating was 71 with funding recommended pending clarifications.

The final proposal is from PLS Staffing Solutions for PLS Hands-On Electronics Training for 120 slots @ \$2,474.73 for a total of \$296,968.70. This proposal is for the provision of Electronics Training which would result in two certifications - IPC and JSTD. These are nationally recognized certifications. However, there are significant issues with the program design. First and foremost, the proposal presented does not have an education component, and therefore, is not in compliance with the requirements of the RFP. Additionally, there is little to no employer commitment documented and no labor market information presented supporting the occupational skills areas; one of the instructors is not certified; the site is not ADA Compliant; the training is located in Tyngsboro, which

presents transportation issues for our customers; and the Training Impact section presents a plan for 40% Entered Employment, well below our placement goal. The work experience component is designed for 12 hours per week for thirteen weeks at an \$11.00 per hour rate; this is not a stepping stone design, and some concern was relayed because this vendor is also a staffing company (the work experience component appeared to be subsidizing work of the staffing company). The average staff rating for this program is 27 and the program is not recommended for funding.

**Motion by Christine Bradshaw seconded by Howard Allen to accept the staff recommendations for funding the 2010 WIA OSY Proposals as presented and to recommend approval to the Planning Committee.**

Discussion followed with Brad Howell noting that it is unlikely that one agency would have all components to comply with the RFP. Irene Chalek said that collaboration and MOAs between organizations may work. Also discussed were the stringent WIA eligibility requirements and outcomes.

**VI Other Business**

There are three programs slated to end this month. They need to be reviewed to determine if we will provide another year of funding to serve more youth. Amy provided a training report on enrollment, educational outcomes, negatives and active job search. The programs are all through LARE. They are an Education & Medical Billing/Coding/Secretarial Program; Education & Medical Assisting Program; and Education C.N.A./C.H.H.A. It appears that at least one program (Medical Billing/Coding/Secretarial) will not meet its goal. We will bring a recommendation to the YC next month on whether or not to re-fund these programs.

Amy also said that she would like the YC to know that there is a need to move \$30,000 from group training to ITAs for older youth.

**VII. Adjournment**

**Having no further business Linda Piergeorge made a motion to adjourn seconded by Lisa Coy. Motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Mary Kivell  
Recorder