



MICHAEL'S HARBORSIDE RESTAURANT
1 Tournament Wharf
Newburyport, MA

Quarterly Meeting Minutes

Friday, February 6, 2009
8:00 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Howard Allen, Joseph Bevilacqua, Shirley Callan, Thomas Casey, Paul Durant, Jeanette Guevara, Robert Ingala, Susan Jepson, Robert LeBlanc, Charles LoPiano, Michael Lynch, Peter Matthews, Ann Ormond, Kevin Page, Jean Perrigo, Cindy Phelan, Steve Salvo, Karen Sawyer, Michael Strem, Michael Sweeney, Cal Williams, Leonard Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Kimberly Abare, Mark Andrews, Lou Antonellis, Pedro Arce, Wayne Capolupo, Stephen Capone, Ronald Champagne, Thomas Connors, James Driscoll, Leanne Eastman, Howard Flagler, Barbara Grant, Gary Hale, Robert Halpin, David Hartleb, Patricia Horgan, Jeff Linehan, Sal Lupoli, Jeff Marcoux, Stefanie McCowan, Maria Miles, John Olenio, Margaret O'Neill, William Pillsbury, Jason Pimentel, Thomas Schiavone, Fred Shaheen

GUESTS PRESENT:

Barbara Zeimetz, Donna Rivera, Michael Munday, Jeffrey Sheehy, Arthur Chilingirian, Kelley D'Arcangelo, Gary Fountain, Odanis Hernandez, Cynthia Key, Fran LaCerte, Amy Weatherbee, Jan Sylvain, John Fioriti, Joni Lee Rossi, Johannah Conway, Honorable Thatcher W. Kezer III

STAFF PRESENT:

Fred Carberry, Elizabeth Kirk, Deborah Andrews, Corina Ossers

1. Call to Order

Joe Bevilacqua, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:10 am. He thanked Ann Ormond for setting up the quarterly meeting at Michael's Harborside Restaurant.

2. Minutes of the October 28, 2008 Meeting

Joe Bevilacqua then called for a motion on the minutes of the 10/28/08 meeting.

Leonard Wilson made a motion to accept the minutes of the 10/28/08 meeting as submitted and Cal Williams seconded the motion. Motion passed.

3. Reports of Committee Chairs

i. Planning Committee

Planning Committee Chair Peter Matthews said that at the end of the second quarter, the career center is well above plan in almost every area. They have already served 4,399 UI claimants which is 68% of plan. As of December 31, 2008, 50% of all job seeker customers served were UI claimants. Veterans served is at 73% of plan and total job seekers served is at 61% of plan. Total employers served is right at 50% of plan with critical industries at 60% and emerging at 41%. The Career Center Executive Director, Arthur Chilingirian, met with State officials to discuss UI issues. Presently in Massachusetts there are 211,000 customers receiving UI assistance compared to 81,000 at the same time last year. A total of 13,000 UI customers were serviced at Career Centers compared to 6,000 at the same time last year. The Division of Unemployment Assistance is currently increasing staffing at the UI Call Center. They will also be increasing the staff at Career Centers by an additional 20 statewide. There were no details regarding which Career Centers would be getting additional staff.

Mr. Mathews continued his report stating that as of December 31, 2008, the unemployment rate for the state was 6.5%. The unemployment rate for the Merrimack Valley was 7.5% and the unemployment rate for the City of Lawrence stood at 13.1%. He noted that nobody thinks this will be getting better shortly. The career center is participating in weekly teleconferences at the state level and the state is trying to move UI claimants to the call centers, which they are actively promoting. Mr. Chilingirian is working on getting two additional employees and for the time being the state has funded a security guard for the career center.

The Lucent/Alcatel National Emergency Grant began on July 1, 2008 and will run until June 30, 2010. Mr. Mathews said that at the end of the second quarter, there were 192 enrollees which is 113% of the planned total of 170 participants. He noted that 64 participants are in training under the TRADE ACT, 23 participants have been exited and 22 of these have found employment at an average wage of \$19.46.

Mr. Matthews continued his report by stating that due to recruitment and retention issues, the Youth Council recommended that the Community Action, Inc. Out-of-School Youth Pre-School Prep Program de-obligate funding for this program and reassess participants for placement. The Planning Committee voted to approve the Youth Council recommendation to de-obligate funding for the CAI, Inc. Pre-School Preparation Program.

The WCTF Grant continues to provide training opportunities to individuals interested in entering a career in manufacturing and incumbent workers interested in improving their skills and advancing their careers. As of December 31, 315 participants have been enrolled, 79 participants were unemployed or under-employed; 235 were incumbent workers, 44 participants attained new employment and 263 participants attained a skilled credential, 50 received a wage increase and 15 received a promotion. He said that they anticipate additional outcomes regarding promotions and wage increases as well as sustainable, innovative training programs that meet the needs of the manufacturing industry.

Mr. Mathews said that regarding the Older Workers Retention grant, the Merrimack Valley WIB has been funded to develop a strategic plan to help companies retain their older workers over a variety of industries. For this grant, they are working in partnership with New England Die Cutting, Inc. Companies with employees age 50 and over as well as management staffs have

been surveyed and the WIB staff is in the process of reviewing the results. Next week interviews will be conducted with employees. Finally, we will work to develop a written strategic plan that will increase the ability of New England Die Cutting and other businesses to retain their older workers. The plan will be submitted to Commonwealth Corporation no later than December, 2009.

Mr. Mathews stated that the purpose of the Ex-offenders Re-entry Grant is to provide resources to local workforce investment boards to plan a comprehensive and integrated ex-offender re-entry service infrastructure. The grant should result in a transformative regional plan that builds capacity through committed partnerships that identify the resources and the support necessary to offer ex-offenders a comprehensive array of education, training and support services leading to their successful return to their communities. Mr. Mathews said that partnering with us on this grant are individuals from the County Sheriff's Department, the Parole Board, local Probation offices, the One-Stop-Career Center, training providers and employers. The grant application has been submitted and awards will be announced sometime in February.

Regarding the Green Jobs: Pathways Out of Poverty Grant Program, Mr. Mathews said that grants made through this program are intended to support pathways toward economic self-sufficiency in the clean energy industry for low and moderate-income individuals. The Merrimack Valley WIB is partnering on this grant with LARE/ American Training, who is the lead applicant. Also partnering with us are several local "green jobs" companies and Northern Essex Community College. The grant application was submitted on January 30th and awards will be announced sometime in late February.

ii. Youth Council

Mr. Williams, Youth Council Chair, reported on youth programming. Our new Youth Workforce Program Manager, Deborah Andrews, is on board. She has 18 years of workforce development experience, for the past five years with the Massachusetts Lodging Association Education Foundation.

YouthWorks, the year-round grant, focuses on subsidized employment for low income youth. We have narrowed our focus to serve youth who have completed a WIA funded program and 5 youth were referred by Department of Youth Services. The grant amount is \$68,735 and nine youth are in the pipeline at this time.

Cal stated that through the Pathways grant, this fall we served 5 new enrollees in the MCAS remediation classes at Middlesex Community College and we have 5 new enrollees through December.

He added that we are looking forward to beginning the Summer Jobs Initiative process.

Through the P21 Resource E grant, the MVWIB is working in partnership with Northern Essex Community College and ValleyWorks Career Center. The grant amount is \$84,000. We have two education counselors from Northern Essex co-located at ValleyWorks Career Center to offer information and counsel customers about Northern Essex's educational, training, remediation programs, and other appropriate resources. Customers are referred to the

counselors by ValleyWorks staff, DTA staff, and through customers' self-referral in response to flyers. We are tracking the process of these referrals. The co-location activity is proving to be very successful. The counselors saw 25 people between October and December to help with activities such as financial assistance applications, GED/ESOL information, to a successful work-study placement at Amesbury High School and Northern Essex. The counselors report great cooperation in the process of referral to them from ValleyWorks and DTA, as well as good support from Northern Essex staff in following up counselors' referrals to them. One of the counselors has agreed to be available in the evening by appointment as necessary in order to serve working youth.

Mr. Williams said that the next steps to follow are: a professional development workshop session for WIA vendors and ABE providers on Northern Essex programs; Northern Essex will train some ValleyWorks staff on the CPT/Accuplacer training. The ACCUPLACER test is a placement test, developed by the College Board, that is used by colleges, universities, and technical schools as an aid to determine the course placement of incoming college students. The test is customized for each educational institution and is administered by each institution itself. The test helps determine if an incoming student should be placed in freshman courses or if that student needs any developmental courses or help prior to enrolling in regular, freshman courses. A benefit of the ACCUPLACER test is that scoring is immediate, and educational institutions have immediate access to student scores, which can aid in rapid course placement. With some ValleyWorks staff able to administer the test, referrals can happen more quickly and the collaboration between ValleyWorks and Northern Essex is stronger; we will convene Northern Essex and existing WIA Vendors to review vendor curricula for recommendations and alignment with Northern Essex transition programs; we will convene stakeholders to map Northern Essex entry points and develop three related career pathways maps.

Another Connecting Activities grant, National Job Shadow Day will be held on February 10, 2009. We are expecting the participation of 16 businesses, 2 of them being WIB members – the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce and Haverhill Chamber of Commerce. Seventy-one students are signed up to participate, representing 4 Merrimack Valley high schools.

Other Connecting Activities event is the Teacher Externship Program. This year, three teachers will participate in externships, one at the Amesbury Chamber of Commerce, one at Polartec, and one is still undecided.

The MVWIB continues to provide work readiness workshops and counseling to the three involved high schools – Haverhill High, Lawrence High and Lawrence Alternative High – and we are close to reaching our goal of serving 450 youth through Connecting Activities.

A Massachusetts Construction Career Day for the Merrimack Valley will be held on May 6, 2009. Up to 200 Merrimack Valley youth can attend. Some of our MVWIB and Youth Council members have attended in the past and look forward to this event every year.

Mr. Williams continued his report stating that they are working on their annual Transitional Information Fair to be held mid-April. Exact date and venue are still to be determined. This

event offers information and resources to educators, parents, and youth, about post-high school options for youth with disabilities.

A Youth Summit requested by Commonwealth Corporation for the three northeastern WIB areas is being put together. Partners include CommCorp, the North Shore and Lowell WIBs, and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Cal said that the purpose of the summit is to support regional teams in understanding and using youth related data and youth development concepts to craft a comprehensive youth agenda that cultivates education and career options for youth. This event will be held March 19th and will probably be held at Merrimack College.

To finish his report, Mr. Williams said that as everyone is well aware, we are working on the High Performance WIB proposal. In the strategic plan we have included goals, partnerships and activities that will contribute to our readiness to meet the objectives and strategies of the expected stimulus recovery package. The Career Centers and the Merrimack Valley WIB intend to be as proactive and as 'shovel-ready' as possible in order to best serve our youth.

iii. Nominating Committee

Ann Ormond, Chair of the Nominating Committee, reported that the committee met on January 22nd at the new WIB office located at 439 South Union Street, in Lawrence. The focus of the meeting was the recruitment of new members from critical and emerging industries, especially the healthcare industry and the manufacturing industry with an emphasis on getting representation from the defense industry and those companies with "green jobs." She said that in the meeting they also discussed the President's stimulus package for "shovel ready projects" that should create jobs in construction. It is vitally important to understand where the jobs are now and what skills and experience are required to fill those jobs and what will be the jobs of the future and what skills will be needed to fill those jobs. We need to work together with employers and training providers to ensure that we are helping to create a workforce that will meet the needs of area employers. The committee felt that it would be beneficial to develop an orientation for board members that would help them to better understand the mission of the MVWIB and the importance of board members' input and engagement. The committee will also keep the WIB informed of any new businesses coming into the region so that the information can be shared with the career center, which has been overwhelmed by UI claimants.

a. Candidates for Board Appointment

Ann Ormond then presented the following candidates who have been recommended for appointment to the board. They are Donna Rivera, Director of the Merrimack Valley Area Health Education Center, Lawrence; Michael Munday, President/COO of Arwood Machine Corporation, Newburyport; and Jeffrey Sheehy, CEO of The Whittemore Company, Inc., Lawrence.

Motion by Leonard Wilson seconded by Peter Matthews to approve the nominations of Donna Rivera, Michael Munday, and Jeffrey Sheehy to the board. Motion passed.

4. Report of Executive Director

Mr. Carberry began by saying that today is the first board meeting with Joe Bevilacqua as Chair of the board. He then, on behalf of the MVWIB, thanked Ann Ormond, President of the

Greater Newburyport Chamber of Commerce & Industry, for her assistance in finding a fitting location for our Quarterly Meeting here in Newburyport. He said that our Board covers the entire lower Merrimack Valley region, from Greater Lawrence to Greater Newburyport, so it's important that we utilize our meetings to accentuate and acknowledge the board's commitment toward providing a place at the table for employers, job-seekers, and workforce development stakeholders from every corner of our service delivery area. This is especially true in trying economic times such as these, where nearly every employment sector and socio-economic class is feeling the pain.

Over the last several months, we have been actively engaged in preparing for submission under the Commonwealth's High Performing Workforce Board Initiative. The crux of the submission packet is the Strategic Plan. In an effort to ensure substantive involvement from a comprehensive sampling of workforce development stakeholders, an advisory board was formed to provide broad oversight and guidance to our effort. Two business sectors were identified as critical to our region: Health Care, because employment opportunities continue to grow, and are forecasted to become even more plentiful in years to come; and the second is Manufacturing, based mainly on the fact that nearly one out of every five workers in the Merrimack Valley is employed in Manufacturing.

In fact, as we examined the current situation closely, it was clear that the manufacturing sector is the foundation of many of the latest wave of emerging sectors, such as Green Jobs and Life-Sciences. Most of the companies in these sectors are, in fact, manufacturing firms with a new set of products. However, it is also clear that a worker with yesterday's skill set is not prepared to compete in today's workforce. The modern worker must be an amalgam of old school work ethic and 21st century technological skill. It isn't easy, but the workers of the Merrimack Valley have risen to the challenge in the past, and will do so again.

Mr. Carberry went on to say that Barbara Zeimetz, who assisted in the development of our High Performing Board submission, will go over the Priorities, Goals, and Benchmarks that support the MVWIB's proposed Strategic Plan, which was mailed to you in your meeting packets. We encourage you to share your thoughts, comments, and suggestions with us today. He added by saying that a good strategic plan is not developed in isolation, but with the advice, input, and guidance of all relevant stakeholders, who comprehend that through this plan, we can have a beneficial impact upon our workers, our employers, and our communities.

Mr. Carberry continued by stating that as everyone is aware, the Congress and the President have been wrangling over the size and content of a proposed economic stimulus bill, tentatively called the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009. Some of the items that made it into the House version include:

- \$30 billion for highway construction
- \$31 billion to modernize public infrastructure that leads to long-term energy savings
- \$19 billion for clean water, flood control, and environmental restoration
- \$10 billion for transit and rail improvements
- \$32 billion to improve energy transmission, distribution, and production systems
- \$16 billion to repair public housing and make energy efficiency retrofits.
- \$6 billion for home weatherization

- \$10 billion for science facilities and research
- \$6 billion to expand broadband access
- \$79 billion to state fiscal relief to prevent cutbacks in key services, including education, public safety, and other critical services

Whereas, one of the primary goals of this Act is to increase the creation of new jobs to deal with the extremely difficult unemployment problem, the Congress has allocated:

- \$4 billion for job training, including formula grants for WIA adult, dislocated worker, and youth services (including \$1.2 billion to create up to one million summer jobs for youth). The needs of workers also will be met through dislocated worker national emergency grants, new competitive grants for worker training in high growth and emerging industry sectors (with priority consideration to “green” jobs and healthcare), and increased funds for the YouthBuild program. Green jobs training will include preparing workers for activities supported by other economic recovery funds, such as retrofitting of buildings, green construction, and the production of renewable electric power.
- \$500 million for state formula grants for construction and rehabilitation of facilities to help persons with disabilities prepare for gainful employment.
- \$500 million to match unemployed individuals to job openings through state employment service agencies and allow states to provide customized services.
- \$120 million to provide subsidized community service jobs to an additional 24,000 low-income older Americans.

Mr. Carberry said they estimate that if the \$4 billion in formula grants survives the Senate, the Merrimack Valley Region could receive approximately \$4 million in additional Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker funding, which would need to be put to work as quickly as possible. The question remains: Are we ready, as a workforce system, including the WIB, Career Center, training providers, technical schools, and private employers, to be able to respond to this challenge? We won't know until we try, but hopefully, the efforts we've already made, working with manufacturers, green jobs companies, education & training providers, construction trades unions, and other key stakeholders, will put us ahead of the curve. Recently, Director of the Mass. Department of Workforce Development, Michael Taylor, attended a national conference in Baltimore, and he found that many states are no where near ready to manage a large influx of federal economic stimulus money.

He announced that the next quarterly meeting of the Massachusetts Workforce Board Association, a statewide collaborative of all 16 WIB regions, will be held on March 5th at Holyoke Community College. The theme of the event is: **“Community Colleges and Workforce Boards: Creating Partnerships that Work!”** We will hear from Bill Messner, President of Holyoke Community College and Ira Rubenzahl, President of Springfield Technical College, as well as an update from the Chairman of the Hampden County Regional Employment Board, Joseph Peters. All MVWIB members are invited to attend with special emphasis on representatives of the private sector. Please contact us if you are interested in attending.

Finalizing his report, Mr. Carberry asked the Board to recognize Career Center Director Arthur Chilingirian, who along with his tireless staff, have been weathering a storm of unemployment claimants, whose numbers exceed anything in recent memory. They have been providing assistance to hundreds of laid-off individuals on a daily basis, treating them with respect, dignity, and compassion. While the state's UI system may be overburdened and outdated, the workers at ValleyWorks Career Centers in Lawrence and Haverhill do all they can to make the best of a bad situation. He asked Chili to extend our gratitude to his entire staff.

5. High Performing Workforce Board Initiative

Fred Carberry introduced Barbara Zeimetz, who is working with the WIB on the High Performing WIB Initiative.

Ms. Zeimetz began by thanking the High Performing Workforce Board Advisory Board who met various times, providing good feedback. She then talked about the strategic priorities; explaining the priorities, goals, activities to accomplish each goal with their respective timeframes and benchmarks.

Mike Sweeney thanked Barbara, Fred, Chili, and Amy for their good work on the High Performing Initiative. **He also added that Mayor Sullivan is very supportive of this and made a motion to approve the Strategic Plan draft.**

Joe Bevilacqua said that there needs to be a connection with trainings and jobs available.

Len Wilson said that the dropout rate in Hispanics is increasing and that schools need to inform us in time when they are beginning to lose students.

Barbara said that this strategic plan is something that needs to keep going once we are certified.

Shirley Callan added that she is overwhelmed with the number of students waiting for their GED. They currently have a waiting list of about three hundred students and most of them are fifteen year old kids.

Motion by Mike Sweeney seconded by Shirley Callan to approve the High Performing Workforce Board Initiative draft. Motion passed.

6. Presentation – John F. Fioriti, Regional Deputy Director, State Office of Minority and Women Business Assistance (SOMWBA)

Mr. Fioriti briefly explained the services of SOMWBA. He said that they are an agency within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts helping promote the development of business enterprises and non-profit organizations owned or operated by minorities and women. In addition to its service to minority and women business enterprises, they have the responsibility to certify businesses that meet certain criteria. A directory of certified minority and women business enterprises and certified minority and women-controlled, non-profit organizations can be found in their website. He then introduced Johannah Conway, President of The New Essex Office, Inc.

Ms. Conway explained that SOMWBA helped her obtain her certification. Her company, The New Essex Office, Inc. provides help with all office needs, whether you are looking for new office furniture, used office furniture, office supplies or office equipment. They also offer Commercial and Residential Moving and Tractor Trailer Leasing. She explained that they can help plan the layout of your new office.

Jonilee Rossi, President & CEO of MacPherson Group is also SOMWBA certified. The MacPherson Group specializes in the placement of legal professionals in major law firms, insurance and financial services companies, and biotech and patent firms. Their goal is to recruit from sources that enhance and embrace equal opportunity. Ms. Rossi said that since 1987, their mission has been to develop and grow practices by supporting and encouraging talent, promoting diversity and creating new opportunities.

7. Other Business

Cal Williams asked if the waiting list of three hundred students waiting for GED is only in the Methuen Adult Learning Center or if this is a region or state number.

Shirley Callan said that this number is only for her site.

Fred Carberry said he would research the GED rate for the region and will forward it to everyone.

Len Wilson said he urges the MVWIB to get school faculty participation on the board because right now there is no representation from the public schools.

8. Adjournment

Having no further business Joe Bevilacqua made a motion to adjourn and Shirley Callan seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned at 9:35 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Corina Ossers
Recorder