



## PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

**Wednesday, November 16, 2011**

7:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board

Lawrence, MA 01843

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Fred Carberry, Atty. Robert Leblanc, Michael Munday, Juan Yepez

Members Absent: Joseph Bevilacqua, Ron Contrado, Kevin Page

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Odanis Hernandez, Deborah Andrews, Barbara Zeimetz, Mary Kivell

Guests Present: Arthur Chilingirian

### **I. Approval of Minutes of October 12, 2011**

A quorum being present, Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:40 a.m. Peter then called for a motion on the minutes of the October 12, 2011 meeting. Rafael Abislaiman said that there were a couple of typos but otherwise the minutes were acceptable.

**Mike Munday made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 12, 2011 meeting with the typos corrected. Juan Yepez seconded the motion and motion passed.**

### **II. H1B Proposal Update**

Rafael Abislaiman said that we would be submitting the H1B proposal today to train American workers to fill jobs and create pathways to jobs now filled by H1B visa recipients from foreign countries. We are applying for \$5M and partnering with North Shore, Lowell and NH WIBs. We also have significant education partners such as area colleges. He said that the most difficult aspect of putting this grant together has been getting employers involved. We have focused this proposal on manufacturing as Ralph said that we felt that our prior submission may have been too broad. He commented that in the Merrimack Valley area 20% of the jobs are in manufacturing and manufacturing is 40% of the area economy. He said that without manufacturing around here we would be a lot poorer.

Mike Munday agreed noting that in a prior job, the company needed 8 engineers and couldn't find any. They did get 6 or 7 from Canada, 1 from India, and 1 from Morocco. He said that one engineer can keep 10 machines busy and said that there is a lack of skills in this area. Ralph said that there are three entry points in this proposal of which one is post

college and would allow for specialized training. Bob Leblanc asked for a copy of the finished proposal which Ralph said he would send to anyone who wanted it but he asked to keep it somewhat confidential, as we may use it again in other submissions.

Discussion then followed on the possible closing of a Raytheon location and the cuts that may come down if the Super Committee doesn't reach consensus on cuts by November 23<sup>rd</sup>. Ralph also mentioned that we have reached the \$15 trillion debt mark in this country with payments of \$30 billion a week on interest alone.

Peter Matthews spoke about how Merrimack Valley Federal Credit Union, which is one of 7,000 credit unions, always pays attention to getting more efficient every day and staying competitive. He said that the federal government should do likewise. Bob Leblanc said that now that we are in a 24/7 news cycle government representatives always talk in the macro and not the micro. The news wants the overall story and the sound bite and they can't get to efficiency. Peter also noted that in business they always look at the short and long term. He said that it seems that government only looks at one year at a time and not the long term plan such as downsizing through attrition and not layoffs.

### **III. FY'12 First Quarter Report**

Odanis Hernandez presented the performance numbers for the First Quarter of 2012 which ended on September 30, 2011. The Annual Plan calls for serving 14,500 and the first quarter number is 6,610 which is 46% of plan with 712 entered employments at 29% and 618 total employers served at 39%.

Bob Leblanc asked if the plan represents actual unemployed people and do we serve a percentage. Chili said that a lot of unemployed don't become members of the Career Center in spite of efforts to engage them. This is not mandated. Discussion followed on whose decision it was not to mandate participation in the Career Center and the fact that in the past, Barbara Zeimetz said that a seminar at the Career Centers was mandated but due to the high volume in the recent economy and the lack of capacity and resources to pass people through, it was discontinued. Often people on UI are not really seeking work while collecting. Chili cited a recent example of a need for entry level computer jobs that folks on UI are not interested in as they are making more money on UI. We have the biggest walk in numbers of any career center and the plan is to put UI walk-ins online by June. We have clients that are limited English speaking and without computers. He doesn't see how that will work for them.

Odanis continued her report referring to the Participant Characteristics. She said that 48% were male and 52% female. Those aged 22-45 were 46%, aged 46-54 were 24%, and aged 55+ were 21%. Of those numbers, 16% were less than high school and 36% had high school diplomas or GEDs. The next page gives the breakdown by city/town. Odanis said that 17.9% are from Haverhill, 35.9% from Lawrence and 10.4% from Methuen. Out of state percentage is 13.4% which includes New Hampshire. The next page was the WIA Title I Adult Program with 125 new participants out of 316 at 40%. There were 21 new enrollments in ITAs and 3 entered employment. Juan Yopez asked about our ITA goal and questioned funding ITAs with 21 out of a goal of 35 and only 3 entered employments. Barbara Zeimetz mentioned that we recently got some additional funding in the amount of \$176,000 that we can use for ITAs. Ralph said that we need better performance in WIA

Adult. He said that if former workers can't find a job what about those who never worked. Barbara said that we need to look at the WIA Adult and Dislocated Workers and see where we get the best benefit. Discussion followed on the number of entered employments and Chili explained that it sometimes takes 90 days for a participant to exit WIA and that the numbers would be high in the next quarterly report. He said that we recently had our annual review and exceeded 100% of our goals and outcomes for last year. Ralph said that the quarterly report is a snapshot of the overall picture. Odanis mentioned that the new participant numbers should be 27 and the carry-ins should be 157. Mike Munday asked what happens when the money is used up. Chili said that this is only one funding source. In addition to WIA, there are Trade funds with more folks enrolled and other funding sources to support training. Barbara said that the next quarter's report will include the trade numbers. Juan Yopez asked for a comparison by year compared to last year and Odanis said that she would prepare a side a by side report for the next quarter. Rafael explained that the state allocates to different vendors and we track case management. He said that in the Annual Plan we cut training and trade dollars which allowed us to maintain staff levels. We need to determine where the balance is between intensive case management and vendor training. We need to find better ways to measure effectiveness. Ralph said that this Career Center does an excellent job. What he said we need to ask is whether the system as a whole is working as well as it should? He also mentioned that this Career Center is the only center that is fully unionized and we are competing with the other 3 or 4 have have no unions. Chili then talked about the need to cut services as funding is decreased and the need for services remains.

Odanis then addressed the Dislocated Worker page of her report that highlights 326 out of a 473 plan goal for total customers enrolled for 69% of Plan. There are 63 new participants with 15 new ITAs and 6 entered enrollments which Odanis said was mentioned earlier and will increase in the next quarter. The average pre-program wage is \$16.02 with an average exit wage of \$15.34. The male participants were 57% and female 43% of which 31% were college graduates and 75% UI claimants. The NEG Report showed 326 NEG enrollments for 81.5% of plan, 69 total exits and 51 entered employments. Chili said that they participate in a vouchering program and they are waiting for the 60 customers in Leominster. Chili said that a lot of the Sonoco/Debbie Staffing folks have gone back to work.

The WIA Title I Youth Program is at 50% of plan for total customers enrolled and no exiters or entered employments as it is too early. Looking at the participant characteristics Bob Leblanc asked how many of the single parents listed at 49% are female. Odanis said that she would get the breakdown.

**Motion by Bob Leblanc seconded by Juan Yopez to accept the FY'12 First Quarter Report as presented. Motion passed.**

#### **IV. Youth Council Update**

Deborah Andrews, MVWIB Youth Program Workforce Manager, gave the Youth Council Update. She said that we have \$80k to utilize after 33 or so ITAs. The State determines performance Goals for Fiscal Year 2012: They are the same goals across the state. Before we decide on a program plan we need to ensure that we will be able to meet these requirements.

The Youth Council had a discussion at the last meeting and one idea was to provide occupational training for seniors in high school who are not planning to attend college. Bob Leblanc asked when the Youth Council would be making their recommendation and Deborah said that once we have comprehensive discussion we will be a determination. The Career Center has run two similar programs for seniors in the past. One program was successful and one was not. The electronic assembly program was successful and those students were placed in training-related jobs. The other program was medical assisting and there was difficulty placing them. If we decide to offer a group program, we will issue an RFP for bids. Deborah said that we can provide an occupational skills group training program that does not exist in the MVWIA at this time, such as group CNC, Electronics, Soldering, IT, or something else in a MVWIA emerging industry. We need to look at whether we want to do a group program. Beverly DeSalvo talked about jobs in machine shops and Heidi Riccio said that the IT field will be the second fastest growth industry in the next ten years. The concern - How do you incentivize youth to participate in the long day? As usual, childcare and transportation can be an issue.

Both tech schools are looking into becoming state vendors. Certifications (as defined by WIA) are attached to all of the skill areas above and must be included in any training. The format does not necessarily have to serve in-school-youth because out-of-school youth are also in need of these programs and may be available during the day. Deborah said that we will be following the HPW Strategic Plan focusing on manufacturing, green jobs/biotech and Health Care. There was further discussion on CNC and machining holding a lot of possibilities in the Merrimack Valley. Beverly DeSalvo spoke about Whittier's program and how the evening classes are full but they cannot fill all the job openings in the valley.

Mike Munday said that he has hired graduates from Whittier and that they have an excellent program. He also has sent employees to Whittier's night school and that they offer NIMS certification. Barbara said that NIMS is a nationally recognized certification. Bob Leblanc also said that Whittier has an excellent program and that what is put in an RFP is very important. He said that he likes to reward success and measure return on investment. He suggested offering points for past performance. Barbara said that it also may be possible to do a pilot program.

#### **V. Safe and Successful Grant Update**

Barbara Zeimet reported on the Safe and Successful Grant. She said that the city was invited to apply for this grant for gang involved city youth and high impact youth. Ten cities in the Commonwealth received funding with Lawrence receiving \$800,000. Barbara said that she had met with Art McCabe who is representing the city and developed a proposal outline to do some career exploration workshops for 20 kids combined with subsidized work experience. We are looking to work with youth who are interested in finding a job and ready to go to work. Juan Yopez said that these are troubled youth. Bob Leblanc explained the different categories of youth involved in the court system and said that those designated youth offenders are the most serious felons. He said that he wondered why we would be spending money on this high risk population with a high degree of recidivism. Barbara explained that this was not our decision. Peter Matthews said that beyond financial institutions what business is going to assume the liability without a background check. Ralph said that this grant is also for those who may be planning revenge or families of those who have committed a serious crime. Barbara said that we are not doing anything yet and has requested assurances for staff to support our staff and screening to determine who is appropriate. The issues with CORI need to be resolved. Bob Leblanc said that youth won't have CORI until they are an adult. Ralph said that we can't take

youth that are so troubled they will endanger anyone. Out of a pool of approximately 200 we hope to be able to work with 20. This is the Governor's initiative.

Peter Matthews said that speaking for the Planning Committee the safety of those people who work here is paramount in this program. Bob Leblanc said that he is opposed to spending money for this program given the high demand for dollars for those who want to get a job and education.

Ralph said that we are the workforce entity in the region and are just one partner along with DYS, Youthbuild and Probation. Mike Munday said that we can't just chase the dollars, if we were to add this category to our annual plan we would say "no". There was further discussion on CORIs and Barbara said that needs to be resolved but we have been clear that we will not engage in any actions that would jeopardize our reputation and relationship with business/employers.

#### **VI. Other Business**

Bob Leblanc asked where we were at with the HPW and Ralph said that we have focused on target areas such as manufacturing, green jobs and health care. Mike Munday said that he was going to a meeting at Comm Corp and to speak to the importance of training. He also mentioned the Pioneer Institute who is also looking at the importance of training. Ralph also noted that we have been working on the HPW to improve the youth pipeline through the Planning Committee.

Barbara Zeimetz reported that we have been taking a close look at ITA vendors regarding performance. She said that we have been getting some push back from vendors and wanted to make the committee aware of this. We have reviewed multiple vendors and have resolved some issues. Barbara said that with limited resources this is the only way to go. Bob Leblanc said he has no problem as long as everyone is treated equally. Barbara assured him that we do treat all vendors equally.

#### **VII. Adjourn**

**Having no further business Juan Yopez made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Robert Leblanc. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell,*

Recorder