



PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, May 7, 2009

8:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board

Lawrence, MA 01840

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Michael Sweeney, Charles LoPiano,
Mike Lynch, Shirley Callan

Members Absent: Pedro Arce, Robert LeBlanc, Sal Lupoli, Karen Sawyer

Staff Present: Fred Carberry, Betty Kirk, Augustine Ambe

Guests Present: Barbara Zeimetz, Joseph Bevilacqua, Arthur
Chilingirian, Amy Weatherbee

1. **Approval of Minutes of 3/18/09**

Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. and called for a motion to approve the minutes of the 3/18/09 meeting.

Motion by Mike Sweeney seconded by Chick LoPiano to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2009 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

2. **Update on Plan for Utilization of Stimulus Funds for Adults and Dislocated Workers**

Fred Carberry said that the purpose of the Planning Committee is to review and recommend the allocation of the injection of federal stimulus money that must be spent in a short period of time. The majority of the spending will be on training and the federal directive is that a minimum of 60% be allocated to training. We need to come up with a strategy. In the past, the strategy was to work with training providers in response to what we see as a demand for training.

Peter Matthews asked what we learned from our recent employer meeting.

Fred said that we were mostly providing information. Employers say that times are tough and many employers we worked with on Workforce Competitiveness

Trust Fund grant have had to lay off employees. Fred said that the intent of the money is to stimulate the economy from the top down.

Betty Kirk then went over the state allocation chart for adults stating that the adult allocation is \$616,776 with \$333,058.80 being sixty percent. These funds can be used to fund training, needs related payments, and support services.

Fred Carberry said that there are a number of ways it can be spent ,such as group training and on the job training (OJT) ,which is an avenue we would like to explore with employers. These funds are in addition to the traditional normal WIA training money and there are a large number of dislocated workers.

Amy Weatherbee said that the state is requiring each region to identify how much will be allocated for occupational skills, OJT, ESOL, and group and customized training. They want this money to be transformative but they will allow no waiver on WIA eligibility.

Betty continued with the dislocated worker chart and the allocation of \$837,774 of which \$502,664.40 is sixty percent.

Mike Lynch asked where we are now and Chili said we are ok with the dislocated worker funds but there are some problems with the adult numbers.

Fred said that there is a concern with the large amount of funds.

Chili said that the money is different than the ITAs and some additional vendors may have the opportunity for funding. Going back to JTPA, many vendors may come back to the table. It is an opportunity to get customized training on board.

Amy spoke about a curriculum at vocational schools for machine technology which is on line. She said that this may be an area we want to promote and can be an excellent resource.

Peter Matthews asked about the OJT money and Fred said that it is a 50/50 match. Peter said that when you bring someone on such as a summer youth they could be training the entire time, moving from one level to another.

Amy explained that the Business Service Rep works with the employer on a training plan and the employer is reimbursed one half the wages up to the point of employment.

Mike Sweeney asked about a list of the largest employers in the WIB region. He suggested sending out a 5 – 10 question survey asking about hiring needs, skills needed and whether they would serve as a site. He continued his remarks stating that employers know their current needs but may not know their needs

far out. We will then have completions and good reasons why there may not be a placement.

Shirley Callan said they did a survey with good response but that it needs to be a simple form.

Barbara Zeimetz said she did a survey for the HPW proposal on manufacturing and health care with good response and agreed it should be simple.

Mike Sweeney said that if participating in training leads to an educational certification that could lead to a job is that a legitimate outcome?

Fred said that completing and receiving a certification is a valid outcome but entered employment is a performance measure.

Mike Sweeney said that we could do the survey and give local colleges the opportunity to partner with the Career Center or certification program working together to justify the job demand and get people enrolled. A person may not have a health care certification for example, but an aptitude and could in six months, even without a job, improve their marketability.

Shirley Callan said that in GED classes not everyone gets a GED but improves a grade level and are more employable.

Mike Sweeney said that we need to clarify referring to a certificate more directly tied to the workplace. We can't guarantee a job by training based on research and job demand in our area in a specific skill.

Fred Carberry said that the labor market information presented at the past summit is dated now, as the market is in constant flux, with everything changing because of the recession. He said that we are supposed to be receiving an update from Paul Harrington with new figures and guidance.

Betty referenced current job postings on MOSES where she is seeing CNC machinist positions and also CNA and pharmaceutical technician openings.

Mike Sweeney stated that he doesn't like relying on someone else especially if the information is stale. We need to do a short survey to engage employers and put them together with training providers.

Mike Lynch suggested getting the employers and training providers together.

Fred said that an example of the methods used in the past was the RFP for in and out of school youth proposals. He referenced the handout which talks about

occupational skills training and identifies critical and emerging industries. It also references the employer connection.

Betty talked about the 2008/2009 WIA OSY Employer Survey included in the RFP.

Mike Sweeney talked about the commitment to hire and said that, since there is no penalty to the private employer, seeing the language may make them worry about liability or penalty. He suggested emphasis, in writing and verbally, that this is a good faith commitment and we understand the demands on business.

Amy explained that this was added by the board to ensure that potential training providers and employers identify if there are jobs in six months. This is a push to vendors to talk with employers.

Augustine Ambe talked about a successful training program with Raytheon where 40 out of 60 participants were hired. Betty Kirk noted that Raytheon helped develop the program and this level of involvement is most important.

Fred said how important employer involvement is and that we would like this committee to allow the WIB/VWCC/DGA to meet internally and develop a strategy for training and come back to the committee after meeting.

Amy Weatherbee mentioned that we don't have our allocations yet and the need to meet internally to determine how to allocate the funds and how to support the training when it is gone.

Joe Bevilacqua said that it was clear in discussions in Washington that the bulk of the money go into training programs. The more money in training the better.

Fred Carberry said that we need to spend the youth money as soon as possible and the adult money with a 60% minimum training threshold.

Mike Sweeney asked if 60% is for training and 10% for admin where does the other 30% go? Fred said it goes to support staff. Chick LoPiano said that the 10% is like a corporate fee and the 30% is program administration. His agency deals with this all the time.

Peter Matthews asked if OJT is the preferred way to go and Fred Carberry said that it has not been used extensively in regular WIA funding as it is expensive to train one person at a time.

Chili talked about an upcoming job fair at the Elks on June 2nd with only 9 employers signed up. A recent job fair in Woburn had only 15 employers. They won't come to a job fair unless they have job openings.

Joe said that the real issue is that we need to focus on more regional consortiums on jobs and training programs on industry sectors looking where jobs may be once the recession is over and what skills are needed.

Mike Sweeney said, speaking from the planning side, you can't take a piece of land and make a clean pad ready for whatever. The dislocated worker and other unemployed have different demographics. What is needed is to load people up with transferrable skills and then match them up with jobs.

Joe said that he knows some companies are not hiring now but the governor and president don't want a gap and want us to reach out beyond the recession. Joe said that there are a number of line techs who will be retiring and we will need to replace them.

Fred said that we will take all the advice given and put together an allocation plan which will then be brought back to the committee.

Peter asked about the end date for the allocations and Fred said 6/30/2011 but we need to get a plan into the state by 5/29/09.

It was agreed to save Wednesday, May 20th for the next meeting and to e-mail information for the committee's review prior to the meeting.

Motion by Mike Sweeney seconded by Chick LoPiano that a minimum of 60% of the funds be allocated for training and to authorize staff to present an allocation plan at the next meeting on Wednesday, May 20th. Motion passed.

Fred Carberry mentioned that at the last meeting the committee asked that a letter be sent to Secretary Bump regarding union concurrence on the summer jobs initiative. He read a letter from Nancy Snyder in response to that letter with a memorandum of understanding template for worksites. In her letter, she notes that municipal unions are aware of the program but would recommend that they be consulted in advance of placing youth at a worksite.

Mike Sweeney said that he was glad to see a response so quickly but wondered if they are willing to act as mediators because he feels that the majority of unions will not sign. What he said is needed is a top down message with the state agreeing with the unions at the state level.

Joe said that we need to make every effort to put kids in the jobs. Amy said that she has raised this question at meetings with the state and they don't seem to want to touch it. Joe said that the key is that the youth are not replacing laid-off workers.

Chili said that the private jobs are looking for older youth. The bulk of younger youth have historically been placed in municipalities.

Amy said that there is a potential to support a supervisory person. If we fund a supervisor, it could offset a salary and prevent a lay-off.

Joe suggested communicating with Nancy and telling her what we intend to do. There are currently 19 states under review and we need transparency and accountability. The goal is to put kids to work.

Amy said that we are shooting at a 100% expenditure this summer.

Peter Matthews asked about the number of youth and Amy said that there are 200 identified worksites through the rfp and there are 900 eligible youth. We will try to employ as many as we can but noted that there is no flexibility to the WIA criteria/regulations.

3. Discussion of Green Jobs Advisory Council

Fred Carberry said that Joe Bevilacqua is the driving force behind this initiative. There is a lot of federal funding targeted at green industries. There are a number of ways to define green jobs from manufacturing to weatherization, building design and architecture. The intent of the Green Jobs Advisory Council is to see what green jobs are and make decisions on training programs.

Joe said that the green jobs industry is evolving and there are three components. The first is innovative, second solar panels and companies, and third traditional such as weatherization. We are having discussions with companies such as Selectria, National Grid and CAC with all the chambers putting together an employer base for us to draw on. This will be an ad hoc committee looking at all the stakeholders and jobs.

4. Update on High Performing WIB

Fred Carberry said that we were not successful in achieving certification as a High Performing WIB. We had a meeting with Jennifer James, who said that our strategic plan was quite good, but we didn't meet the 80% threshold requirement averaging 71%. Of the eight applicants, only one was approved and they were a second time applicant. They have agreed to work with tier two boards to help them improve their application and said that they would get back to us in two to three weeks regarding technical guidance and examples.

Barbara Zeimetz said that we still don't know what the specific issues are. We did ask them to consider us for technical assistance instead of waiting to do a complete certification submission for the next round. Barbara said that 70% of

the work has been done and some of the information will become outdated if we wait until the next round.

Motion by Mike Sweeney seconded by Shirley Callan to authorize Fred Carberry to send a letter to Jennifer James asking for written feedback on the MVWIB High Performing WIB proposal with specific details and information on what is needed. Motion passed.

Peter Matthews then said that he was pleased to report that, at the upcoming US Small Business Administration MV Chamber of Commerce event on June 5th at 7:30 am, the ValleyWorks Career Center would be the recipient of the business assistance award.

5. Meeting with ABE Providers and LWIB Director

Shirley Callan said that she requested this item be placed on the agenda. She is the ABE representative and as an ABE provider learned that there will be an additional 3% reduction in funding, on top of the 10% cut, which could jeopardize federal funds. At the last meeting in March, she requested a meeting for the regions' providers with the WIB Executive Director. She said that she has been requesting a meeting and has not been able to get one scheduled.

She said that she has attended a meeting in Lowell with ABE providers and feels that the MVWIB is behind Hamden County, Boston and Lowell in the process. Shirley said that their grant is due on May 18th and the providers are having a meeting on May 13th. She said that we need basic skills and ESOL to prepare people for jobs.

Mike Sweeney asked where the meeting is scheduled for and Fred Carberry said that he has spoken with Patricia Pelletier and the meeting is at this office at 10:00 a.m. on May 13th with all area ABE providers invited. We are looking at models that meet WIA requirements as there have been problems in the past with placement.

Betty Kirk suggested ABE providers partner with someone who does occupational skills training and that could be funded through ARRA.

Mike Sweeney said that we need to have the meeting on May 13th and outreach all the providers, encouraging them to attend. There needs to be discussion on what potential funds could be used and define what are the barriers. He said that ABE is the foundation of what we should be doing.

6. Other Business

Peter Matthews said that with the heavy agenda in the next couple of months he wondered if we need to meet earlier or more frequently.

After discussion, the consensus was to meet on Wednesday, May 20th at 8:30 a.m.

7. Adjourn

Having no further business Mike Lynch made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Mike Sweeney. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kiwell

Recorder