



PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, July 28, 2009

8:00 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board

Lawrence, MA 01840

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Charles LoPiano, Robert LeBlanc, Shirley Callan, Michael Sweeney, Joseph Bevilacqua

Members Absent: Pedro Arce, Sal Lupoli, Karen Sawyer, Mike Lynch

Staff Present: Fred Carberry, Betty Kirk, Deborah Andrews

Guests Present: Judy Ann DeLucia, Barbara Zeimetz, Amy Weatherbee, Arthur Chilingirian, Cal Williams

I. Summer Jobs Programs

Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. stating that we are here for this special meeting to see what we can do to work together as a committee in discussing the Summer Youth Program. He said that he has no agenda other than the discussion on the status of the Summer Jobs Program.

Fred Carberry said that Arthur (Chili) Chilingirian would give the update on the progress of the Summer Jobs Program.

Chili distributed a handout, as of yesterday, with the numbers and wages by week for the ARRA and YouthWorks programs. He said that there are 480 youth currently on payroll for a total of \$81,236 in wages. The goal is for 700 ARRA youth which will bring us to 53% of the funding which is where we want to be. He said that initially we talked about expending all the funds but that is proving too difficult at this time.

Joe Bevilacqua asked what the plan is for the rest of the program which will be ending in approximately 5 weeks.

Chili said that the original end date for Summer Youth was 8/21/09 and then put to 8/28/09 for YouthWorks. He said that if we can push the ARRA end date to 9/30/09, we will be able to keep more OSY than ISY.

Robert LeBlanc moved that the end date for ARRA be extended to 9/30/09 seconded by Mike Sweeney. Motion passed.

Additionally, Chili said that late yesterday he received a waiver from the state extending the deadline for ARRA from October 1st to March 31, 2010 without WIA guidelines. The only criteria for the 18-24 year olds is work readiness. He asked the board to vote on this waiver.

Bob LeBlanc asked if the waivers have been approved by the state and Chili said they have been.

Motion by Chick LoPiano seconded by Bob LeBlanc to extend the ARRA program for Out-of-School Youth as provided in the state waivers. Motion passed.

Amy Weatherbee said that the state will not touch eligibility but this will relieve the follow-up requirement and have a lighter performance goal.

Shirley Callan said that participants in DOE programs are eligible.

Peter Matthews asked if, of the approximately 500 youth, has eligibility been a problem.

Chili replied that eligibility has not been an issue. He said the requirement that, in addition to being low income, they must meet another barrier is problematic. We had youth who did not meet the additional barrier.

Joe said that this is federal law and that every state has requested a waiver and has been refused.

Bob LeBlanc asked if we could take a vote requesting a waiver and let them deny the request.

Joe Bevilacqua said that the President wanted to serve the most disadvantaged when they were designing WIA.

Bob LeBlanc said that there are a number of people today who are trying to survive and these programs ought to be available to them.

Shirley Callan asked that, as a matter of courtesy, questions and comments be directed through the committee chair.

Joe said that we could take Bob's suggestion and merge it. He said that he has participated in discussions in Washington with other state chairs regarding youth

barriers. They may meet the age and income guidelines but not the other at risk factors. This is why Peter called this meeting and this is the WIBs responsibility.

Chili said that the youth take a test and if they perform at grade level they know they won't get in the program.

Motion by Bob LeBlanc seconded by Mike Sweeney to draft a letter stating this committee's view that the requirement that a youth must have a barrier in addition to being income eligible be removed. Motion passed.

It was agreed that Fred Carberry and Chili would meet and draft a letter for Peter Matthew's signature as chair of this committee.

Chili said that of the 164 worksites, 108 have been used.

Joe asked if, with the state waiver, they would be able to get placements to the worksites.

Chili said that they are working as quickly as they can and some worksites don't have a youth match.

Joe said that it is important that the community sees the process.

Judy DeLucia, GLVTS Superintendent, said that she has talked with Chili and that GLVTS does not have a problem.

Joe explained that some committee members sit on other boards and that the status of the youth program has come up, that is why he stressed the importance of communication.

Amy said that we have been sending updates via e-mail through Deborah Andrews to 165-180 worksites and agrees that we need to look at a good way to communicate about potentially continuing youth beyond 9/30/09 and do it immediately.

Chili said that we are having difficulty getting older youth as we exhausted our pool by placing them early on. He mentioned that the TABE testing takes time and he agrees it is a good idea to communicate immediately with worksites.

Shirley Callan mentioned that she has teachers certified in TABE who can help for a week in August with testing for the Career Center.

Joe said that this is a very good meeting, communicating with each other.

Cal Williams asked if the youth that may be extended would be counted or just continue on for the numbers needed. The answer was continued.

Peter Matthews asked what the obstacles are going forward.

Chili said that this is a two year program. We were aggressive putting it at one year and right now 50% of YouthWorks has been eliminated in the state budget. The obstacle now is with YouthWorks (133 youth and a goal of 205.) We would like to continue enrolling in YouthWorks with the deadline of 8/28/09 so that all the money is spent and keep working on ARRA as we go along. We don't want to turn any money back.

Joe Bevilacqua said that the priority from the president and governor is ARRA. They want 70% spent the first year and the governor is already looking for numbers. We cannot let ARRA slide.

Mike Sweeney said that we are expecting a decrease in youth funds of 50% next year and we know, at the very least, we can spend federal stimulus until next summer. We need to look at that.

Fred said that he concurs with Chili and Joe but with the YouthWorks deadline of 8/28, he said that we should spend that money.

Barbara Zeimetz said that the kids in YouthWorks can be moved to ARRA in the added timeframe through the waiver and extended deadline. She said that this reflects the state's awareness of the large task of implementing ARRA in such a short timeframe.

Fred Carberry said that the GAO is very satisfied with our progress and they are coming on Thursday to do site visits of monitoring.

Amy Weatherbee said that, unless there is a very egregious problem, there won't be any findings.

Fred said that their interest in site visits is precipitated because they are doing monthly reports to Congress.

Motion by Mike Sweeney seconded by Shirley Callan to focus on filling the 205 YouthWorks slots by the August deadline. Motion passed with Joe Bevilacqua abstaining.

Mike Sweeney said that it would be helpful for the Planning Committee to get weekly or bi-weekly updates on the money spent. This would be a good tracking mechanism.

Amy said that she requests all timesheets on Monday and reviews them by 4:00 p.m. She mentioned that the City of Lawrence treasurer's office has been very patient. She said that she should be able to provide the updates on Thursdays. There are five group projects and she will need to determine how to report on them along with the youth stipends.

Deborah Andrews said that she has been getting weekly reports and putting them on the websites. She will send them to the Planning Committee.

Peter asked when the next meeting will be and Fred Carberry said that we are in the midst of the Annual Plan which is late this year. The due date has been pushed out to August 25th by the state. Fred said that there will be special meeting of the WIB on August 20th at Sal's with the Planning Committee meeting the day before on August 19th and the Youth Council on August 12th to review the youth portion.

Cal Williams asked Chili what the Youth Council can do to help them meet their goals. Chili said just trust we will get the job done. We won't see 900 participants but are shooting for 700.

Joe said that ARRA is being monitored like no other program. The President and Congress want no problems or going backward. He said that this has been a great meeting and this is what the WIB is supposed to be doing.

Bob LeBlanc asked how much additional funding Chili received and he replied \$1.4M total. He also said that at different times he has had over 25 staff working on this program. He said that understanding WIA eligibility usually takes new employees one year.

Mike Sweeney said that we served 214 Summer Youth last year. In general, we received a 100% increase + 50% across the board. One of the dangers to small business is that it grows. It is no surprise that there have been a couple hiccups. He said that the staff have done a wonderful job and suggested going forward, that staff of the WIB/DTD/DGA have a standing weekly meeting. Put the issues on the table and work them out.

He also said that we can dovetail on this program and the new employers we want to recruit. We also need them to understand that the youth may need that phone call to show up to work and on time. There are also some private industries wanting to participate who are in areas that are inaccessible and some whose circumstances have changed. There is an opportunity with Dr. Callan's program for testing and recruitment which will provide workforce training experience and an education completion. This is the kind of program that is needed. Mr. Sweeney said that he supports the President as Commander and Chief but he is only interested in providing quality programs. He said that if

every state has requested a waiver then that speaks to the problem with the program. We need to keep our eyes on the prize.

Shirley thanked Mike for his kind remarks on her program and stated that she collaborates well with Chili and has a great working relationship.

Judy Ann DeLucia said that she feels somewhat responsible for this meeting and wanted to state that she has spoken with Chili whose work has been exceptional. The fact is that we all went out recruiting businesses to participate to get them to try and help these kids. The perception of businesses is that they weren't hearing anything but she realizes that was because the program was going so fast.

Peter Matthews said that he learned a long time ago not to respond to one complaint but he too had promoted the program and was hearing that they hadn't gotten placements. That is why he called this meeting to get an update on the status. He said that weekly reports to this committee will be helpful.

II. Update on High Performing WIB Application

Fred Carberry said that there have been meetings with the state and Undersecretary Jennifer James and we are awaiting detailed action items.

Barbara Zeimetz said that she sent an e-mail to Jennifer James asking for the information and she replied that it was almost done. Barbara said that they liked the plan and are looking for a revenue generating plan to support the initiatives. They are also looking for us to develop a "dashboard" report asking the board what will easily and readily detail progress on the strategic plan as it is implemented. The strategic plan is what guides the work of the WIB. Barbara said that the key is thinking what you are doing works with other agencies. This is what the board needs to do to maximize what is on the table.

III. Update on Status of 501©3 Application

Fred Carberry said that we are certified with the Commonwealth. The IRS needs the previous three years of financials and an updated list of directors. Fred said that he has tried to contact the CPA who is doing the work pro bono. Once the application is complete, the fee is \$750 and Fred said that it will be submitted before the October board meeting.

Mike Sweeney asked if the CPA has completed the application. Fred said that he has been somewhat unresponsive to his calls and e-mails but once the information is updated he is confident it will be submitted to the IRS prior to the Annual Meeting in October.

IV. Adult Unemployment Rate

Peter Matthews then referred to the next agenda item stating that the most recent unemployment rates for the region are alarming.

Mike Sweeney said that the WIB needs to be the engine to address the high unemployment pro-actively and he sees this as an opportunity. We need to talk about what we are doing and what we can be doing being more aggressive engaging business. He mentioned that lending is an issue for small business in this economy and maybe we can bring this to our board members in the financial sector. Mr. Sweeney said that manufacturing is going away and we need to prepare ourselves and board members for that eventuality.

Mike continued his remarks stating that we need to focus our attention on recruiting business and formulating a team to recruit business to the Merrimack Valley. We need to send a letter to each business extolling the value of locating in the Merrimack Valley. He said that we need to be more creative and think out of the box pursuing business. There needs to be more than we are doing and this should be on every agenda.

Bob LeBlanc wondered if it would be helpful to survey board members in attendance at the August 20th meeting.

Joe Bevilacqua said that one thing we are doing to reach out is the Green Jobs Advisory Council with the goal to assist business to find the resources they need. He also said that meeting with the economic development directors in the cities and towns would be advisable as economic development is workforce development. Joe said that Fred is working on a better website and it is important to be pro-active.

Barbara Zeimetz talked about a regional innovation grant with Lowell, the MVWIB and Southern New Hampshire focusing on displaced manufacturing workers. There is a need to create a regional steering committee and Mt. Auburn Associates have been contracted to do an economic development survey and resource directory on education and training opportunities. This is just getting underway and feeds into what we are talking about.

Peter Matthews said that local smaller financial institutions are able to lend money to small business within regulations. Perhaps it is the larger institutions that are reluctant to lend.

Mike Sweeney suggested calling a meeting of small to medium financial institutions in the Merrimack Valley and then focusing on the bigger institutions.

Mr. Sweeney also said that we don't do enough to engage minority issues. There is no good mixture on the board, particularly in Lawrence and Haverhill.

Someone with the ethnic background could help us focus on barriers of engagement of minority workers around education and job training. We have a large Vietnamese and Cambodian community that is not represented.

Bob LeBlanc noted that the CEO has the appointing authority. Mr. Sweeney said that he realizes that but that he is asking for help.

Shirley Callan said that she said that, based on her experience, not speaking English is the barrier to not only getting a job but getting a better job.

Mike Sweeney agreed and said that programs such as Shirley's provide a tremendous service. He said that he feels that if we engage more adults and young people and help them to obtain proficiency in English that is the way to go. This could lead to engaging them in education material.

Shirley Callan said that there is a huge wait list for her program and they prioritized participation for Methuen parents.

Barbara Zeimetz said that when she shopped this program a number of years ago, Methuen was the only school system to take it up.

Chick LoPiano said that parent involvement is a major focus of Head Start.

Joe then mentioned that Secretary Suzanne Bump would be in attendance at the MVWIB Annual Meeting on October 1st.

V. Adjourn

Having no further business Joe Bevilacqua made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Shirley Callan. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Recorder