



Flatbread Company
5 Market Square #B1
Amesbury, MA

Minutes

Tuesday, April 28, 2009
7:30 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Howard Allen, Joseph Bevilacqua, Thomas Casey, Jeanette Guevara, David Hartleb, Robert Halpin, Robert Ingala, Susan Jepson, Jeff Linehan, Stefanie McCowan, Peter Matthews, Mike Munday, Kevin Page, Donna Rivera, Fred Shaheen, Jeff Sheehy, Michael Sweeney, Cal Williams, Leanne Eastman

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Kimberly Abare, Mark Andrews, Pedro Arce, Lou Antonellis, Shirley Callan, Wayne Capolupo, Stephen Capone, Ronald Champagne, Thomas Connors, James Driscoll, Paul Durant, Howard Flagler, Barbara Grant, Gary Hale, Charles LoPiano, Michael Lynch, Sal Lupoli, Jeff Marcoux, Maria Miles, John Olenio, Ann Ormond, Jean Perrigo, Cindy Phelan, Margaret O'Neill, William Pillsbury, Robert LeBlanc, Jason Pimentel, Steve Salvo, Karen Sawyer, Tom Schiavone, Mike Strem, Len Wilson

GUESTS PRESENT:

Arthur Chilingirian, Odanis Hernandez, Fran LaCerte, David Souza, Theresa Allen, Sheryl Scannell, Julie Gadziala, Gary Fountain, Matt Sherrill, Jan Sylvan, Stanley Usovicz

STAFF PRESENT:

Fred Carberry, Elizabeth Kirk, Deborah Andrews, Mary Kivell, Corina Ossers

1. Call to Order & Welcome

Board Chair Joseph Bevilacqua called the meeting to order at 7:40 am stating that he would like to thank Amesbury Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Stefanie McCowan for helping to reserve the site for today's meeting in Amesbury. He said that we are keeping with the MVWIB's efforts to conduct board meetings in different communities throughout the region.

Stefanie then introduced Amesbury Chamber president Matt Sherrill from Gould Insurance who said that Amesbury is a great place to live and work and then introduced Mayor Thatcher Kezer.

Amesbury Mayor Thatcher W. Kezer III welcomed members and guests of the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board to Amesbury. He said that those who haven't been in Amesbury for a while must have said wow. We have a great team working in Amesbury. He said that there are two types of people who locate in Amesbury. The first is the young professional and those with young kids who come with kayaks on their roofs and the second group is the newly empty nesters who come with kayaks as well. They take advantage of our open space and waterways. They enjoy the social scene and restaurants like Flatbread which is a terrific business. He said that Flatbread was one of the first restaurants to take a chance on Amesbury.

2. Report of Chairman

Joe Bevilacqua said that we are fortunate to have a Mayor like Mayor Kezer who believes in workforce development matters. He then said that there is a lot happening. We have had several meetings regarding the summer youth program and have had a good meeting with the mayors and town managers. This year we are able to serve youth up to age 24. There are several issues under the federal stimulus package with funding and timeframes, as well as the expectation that we must do it right.

No one knows when things will get better and the WIB is feeling the impact at the career center where people come for services. He suggested board members take a walk by the career center and see the faces of the people.

Joe said that we have a good working relationship with state officials and the demand for services is getting greater putting a strain on the workforce system. He said that we will talk about green jobs later in the meeting. He thanked the Mayor for his remarks.

3. Minutes of the February 6, 2009 Meeting

Joseph Bevilacqua called for a motion on the minutes of the February 6, 2009 meeting.

Jeff Linehan made a motion to accept the minutes of the February 6, 2009 meeting as submitted and Cal Williams seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Joe Bevilacqua then called on Planning Committee Chair Peter Matthews to give the Planning Committee report.

4. Reports of Committee Chairs

i. Planning Committee

Planning Committee Chair Peter Matthews said that at the end of the third quarter, the career center is well above plan in most categories. The career center has served 11,811 job seekers which is 81% of plan. Service to unemployed job seekers is at 87% of plan. They have served 6,201 UI claimants which is 95% of plan. Veterans served is at 96% of plan. Peter continued stating that the career center has served 817 employers, 291 new employer customers and 526 repeat customers. They have served 365 employers representing critical industries, which is 112% of plan and 54 employer customers representing emerging industries, which is 71% of plan. Based on the 2007 Blueprint Update, critical industries include healthcare, manufacturing, food production, construction, trucking & warehousing and education & human services. Emerging industries include life sciences, financial services and nanotechnology. However, as the economy restructures, we will be carefully monitoring all

industry sectors as they continue to evolve with a special focus on employers with “green jobs” (green jobs manufacturing, retrofitting of buildings and others).

At the end of March, the Dislocated Worker Program had enrolled 401 participants, which is 160% of plan. Of these, 107 have been exited with 92 finding jobs at an average wage of \$19.17 which is an 86% wage retention rate, a very respectable outcome considering the economy.

The Youth Program appears to be struggling. Although there are 217 enrollees, 170 are carry-ins with only 47 new participants. At this point, 46 participants have been exited, which is only 26% of plan. At the end of the third quarter, 37 youth participants have entered employment or education, which is only 28% of plan. We are finding that youth are having to compete with older workers for jobs that traditionally went to them.

The Lucent/Alcatel Grant has enrolled 206 participants, which is 121% of plan. 48 individuals have been exited with 44 obtaining employment at an average wage of \$17.71. While the wage retention rate is only 70%, the average pre-wage of \$25.26 is high and difficult to match in this economy.

The current unemployment rate for Massachusetts is 8.2%. The unemployment rate for the Lower Merrimack Valley is 9.6%. Lawrence has the highest unemployment rate in our region at 16.5%, followed by Methuen at 10%, Haverhill at 9.5% and Salisbury at 9.3%.

The Planning Committee has approved the following changes to the WIB’s ITA policy:

1. For the dislocated worker population, the eligibility definition will be broadened beyond currently dislocated workers to include underemployed dislocated workers. The definition for an underemployed dislocated worker is an individual who qualifies as a dislocated worker within the previous two years and has taken employment that provides less than self-sufficient wages.
2. To remove the educational cap on dislocated workers, ensuring that dislocated workers with a Master’s Degree or higher may be awarded ITAs if it is determined that these workers are no longer marketable with their current skills.
3. To raise the funding cap for an ITA for occupational skills from \$5000 to \$15,000, and for an ITA for occupational skills and education combined from \$8000 to \$15,000.
4. To increase the average placement wage per hour for ITA training providers from \$8.50 to \$10.00.

Motion by Susan Jepson seconded by Mike Munday to confirm the changes to the ITA Policy as voted by the Planning Committee. Motion passed.

The Planning Committee voted to approve the recommendation of the Youth Council to expand support services to youth during the twelve month follow-up period after exit from WIA Youth.

Motion by Cal Williams seconded by Howard Allen to confirm the expansion of the support services to youth during the twelve month follow-up period after exit from WIA Youth as voted by the Planning Committee. Motion passed.

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the Merrimack Valley WIB region will receive an allocation of approximately \$3,000,000, with 60% of program funds to be used for training. \$616,776.00 has been allocated for Title I Adult activities, \$930,860.00 for Dislocated Workers and \$1,477,863.00 for Youth activities. It is important that the money be spent quickly and wisely. The Youth Council has met and recommends that 1.3million be targeted for the summer youth program. We are currently identifying worksites for youth summer jobs. Youth cannot be placed in a position where an individual has been laid off and we will need union concurrence from any business, agency or municipality where there is a union. The Committee voted to draft a letter to either the Governor or Secretary Suzanne Bump regarding the union issue as it relates to Stimulus funds and circulate it to committee members. Once the committee concurs on the content, the letter will be sent out.

There is approximately \$144,000 available for training for Out-of-School Youth. The Planning Committee voted to approve the Youth Council's recommendation to procure for FY2009-2010 for training targeting Out-of-School Youth.

The Ex-Offenders' Re-Entry Grant has been approved for funding and we are awaiting the official notification. That concluded his report.

Joe Bevilacqua said that the stimulus money has two priorities. The first is that the money must be spent quickly, sixty percent this year, and the second priority is transparency and accountability. The federal government will closely monitor the funds and the pressure is on the WIBs to do it right.

Robert Halpin asked for the allocation numbers and Peter Matthews repeated them.

Jeff Linehan said that there is a lot of money for training but no jobs and wondered if the cost of doing business in Massachusetts is higher how can they place people.

Joe Bevilacqua said that in each state there are jobs that can't be filled and we need to train for those jobs but also look beyond the recession and train for future jobs. He said that is why we need to work with private industry to identify the skills needed and identify what jobs will be tomorrow. Joe said that we are not as bad off as other states. He said that Jeff posed an excellent question. He said that we need to look at skills gaps as now there is the most money ever in the system but it needs to be tied to career paths to get youth ready for jobs.

Joe then called on Youth Council Chair Cal Williams for his report.

ii. Youth Council

Cal Williams, Youth Council Chair, reported on youth programming. He said that Deborah Andrews, Youth Workforce Program Manager, and the Youth Council have been working with the Career Center on the summer jobs programs, both YouthWorks, which serves Lawrence and Haverhill, and ARRA, which will serve eligible youth throughout the entire valley.

The ARRA federal youth funds require that we dispense at least 60% of the funding this summer and if we spend 100%, that would be ok. YouthWorks is the state summer program which has been funded through Commonwealth Corporation and served Lawrence/Haverhill neediest youth, with 10% going to other communities. Typically we have served about 200

youth per summer. We will still have the same YouthWorks money this year, but we will have additional federal stimulus funding to serve the whole valley, with the caveat being income eligibility. We expect that 800 – 1000 youth will be served through our programs this summer.

Private employers, non-profit agencies and municipalities can hire 14-24 year olds who would earn \$8 per hour working 20-30 hours per week with payment processed through the City of Lawrence Division of Grants Administration. This would put money in the youth's pockets and could open the door for hiring youth when the summer is over.

Cal noted that under WIA regulations there are many outcomes, but this summer the only outcome required is *work readiness*. Employers are being asked to ensure that youth are placed in meaningful jobs. The youth cannot replace or fill the positions of people who have been laid off. Other caveats: They also cannot work in casinos, aquariums, pools, zoos and golf courses. The positions will run for seven weeks, from July 6, until August 21. Each youth is required to have a Work Based Learning Plan which will be developed with the youth, employers, and job coaches. The Learning Plan sets goals for the young person to learn or meet by the end of the seven weeks.

We have convened three meetings to explain the program and ask for participation. The first was hosted by Mayor Sullivan at the Merrimack Valley Federal Credit Union with Merrimack Valley municipal and school administrators. We held meetings in Lawrence and Newburyport to present the program to potential employers. On Friday, April 24, forty-five employers had signed up to participate and many of them have multiple positions available. We have presented the information on the radio, through the newspapers and at civic group meetings to spread the word.

Cal said that we are also releasing a mini-RFP and holding a Bidders' Conference on May 4 at the Haverhill Public Library. The RFP will ask for proposals for work and learning programs over the summer. Many youth will participate in summer jobs through these programs offered by non-profit organizations. We have copies of employer brochures for anyone interested.

Lisa Coy and her staff are scheduling times at schools, community based, social service and other youth-serving organizations where they can meet with interested youth, help them fill out the application, and determine eligibility.

Cal reported that we held our youth summit with Commonwealth Corporation and the other Northeast WIBS. Andy Sum's data regarding dropout information in the area and employed youth was not encouraging, even though it was not a surprise. Participants from our WIB area talked about the strengths and needs in the region. It was agreed that folks who serve youth are the strength. The takeaway from the event is that service providers need to communicate better and more often. We need something like a WIKI which is similar to face book or my space and is an interactive website. Deborah said that perhaps this summer we could have our summer youth work on this project.

Cal also said that Russ Mayer from Merrimack College has been exploring youth homelessness in the Merrimack Valley with us through Pathways to 21 grant. Merrimack College will present the resulting white paper at Merrimack College on April 30th from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. Please

RSVP to the WIB if you are interested in attending. The paper will be linked to the WIB website after April 30.

We now have 25 Youth Council members. Because we have so many new members, Sam Martin from the Commonwealth Corporation conducted a WIA 101 training session after our last Youth Council meeting. There were about 10 participants, from long-term supporters to new members.

iii. Nominating Committee

In the absence of Ann Ormond, Chair of the Nominating Committee, Stefanie McCowan reported that the committee met on April 7th at the WIB offices at 439 So. Union Street, Lawrence. The committee agreed that health care and manufacturing are still the most critical industries in the region and that "green jobs" is the new manufacturing. The committee feels that we need to identify "green jobs" companies in the region and create a "green jobs" council to identify present and future jobs and the skills needed to fill these jobs. The committee also discussed the importance of bringing Merrimack Valley Hospital and Caritas Holy Family Hospital back on the board. Leanne Eastman agreed to reach out to Merrimack Valley Hospital and Joe Bevilacqua will contact Holy Family. The committee also discussed reaching out to seasonal businesses, especially in Newburyport and Salisbury and connecting them with the career center in order to participate in the Summer Jobs for Youth Program.

The committee will continue to work on developing 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 voted to recommend the following individuals for membership to the board:
Ms. Julie Gadziala, President of Encore Staffing, Lawrence, MA
Mr. Stanley Usovicz, Regional Director of External Affairs for Verizon

Motion by Stefanie McCowan seconded by Mike Sweeney to approve the nominations of Julie Gadziala and Stanley Usovicz to the board. Motion passed.

Joe asked the new board members to say a few words. Julie Gadziala said that she has been in business for ten years in Lawrence as well as Manchester, New Hampshire and said that she is seeing a trend for more jobs.

Stan Usovicz said that he works for Verizon and covers the territory from Weston to Amesbury. He is a former mayor and city councilor and looks forward to serving on the MVWIB.

5. Report of Executive Director

Fred Carberry said that on behalf of the MVWIB, he would like to thank Mayor Thatcher Kezer. He also thanked Stefanie McCowan, Executive Director of the Amesbury Chamber of Commerce, for her assistance in finding this excellent location for our Quarterly Meeting here in Amesbury. As noted in our February meeting in Newburyport, our Board covers the entire lower Merrimack Valley region, from Greater Lawrence to the seacoast, 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 why, with the

encouragement of our Chairman, Joe Bevilacqua, we have vigorously developed a plan, which would bring our board meetings to various locations throughout our region.

On Thursday, March 19th, Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Suzanne M. Bump addressed business, community, and education leaders at Merrimack College discussing regional strategies to address the employment needs of youth in the northeast region of Massachusetts.

This regional summit at Merrimack College was planned and presented by a collaboration of the three WIBs of northeast Massachusetts, Greater Lowell, Northshore, and Merrimack Valley. It was the first in a series of youth-focused summits aimed at cultivating education and career opportunities for all youth. The event was designed to bring together committed partners in business, education, community, faith-based organizations, and state workforce development officials to create positive futures and upwardly mobile pathways to education and careers.

“At a time when drop out rates are ever-increasing and the economy is struggling, our commitment to the success of our state’s youth and to the general strength of our economy is more important now than ever,” said Secretary Bump. She continued: “This meeting will yield more effective ways to meet the needs of this vital region of Massachusetts, as well as new opportunities in education and employment for young workers in this challenging job market.”

A labor market report by Dr. Andrew Sum of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University was the focal point of the summit. It is available on the MVWIB website.

We thank board member and Merrimack College President, Ronald Champagne, for hosting the event at the college.

On Wednesday, April 1st, The Merrimack Valley and Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Boards, in collaboration with The Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council, presented the results of a groundbreaking study entitled: Immigrant Workers in the Massachusetts Health Care System at an event held at Salvatore’s Riverwalk Conference Center. The study was sponsored by The Immigrant Learning Center, (ILC) Inc. under its Public Education Program. The ILC worked with a research team drawn from Tufts University, the University of Massachusetts Boston and the University of California at Berkeley. The team conducted the study over the last 16 months to show how immigrant workers in Massachusetts have a significant presence across the spectrum of health care from physicians and surgeons to home health aides in an industry vital to the state and Merrimack Valley economies. This report is also available on the MVWIB website.

Fred said that later in this meeting, we will be discussing the formation of a Green Jobs Advisory Panel. This is an idea that our Chairman is very enthusiastic about, and who will be playing a key role. It’s clear that the President and the Congress would like to see the country move away from dependence on fossil fuels including imported oil. To move the economy in that direction, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has allocated billions of dollars toward the development of green technologies and toward training people for jobs in producing, servicing, and installing these technologies. While there’s a lot of talk about green jobs, we still don’t have a solid grasp of what these jobs are, what skills gap exists that might

prevent a job-seeker from attaining a job, or prevent an employer from finding adequately trained workers, and how do we go about developing the proper training to close that skills gap, quickly and effectively?

WIB staff, along with some Board members, and other regional stakeholders had spent several months preparing a submission package for the state's High Performing Workforce Board Initiative. After several meetings of advisory boards and focus groups, we were able to put together a very well thought-out and comprehensive application. Earlier this month, Fred said that he received a phone call from Under-secretary of Labor & Workforce Development, Jennifer James, who advised him that our submission had failed to reach the 80% score, across all review categories, which was a requirement for certification as a high-performing workforce board. Needless to say, we were very disappointed, but that disappointment was somewhat mitigated by the fact that of eight WIBs who submitted packages, only two gained certification. We have met with the Under-secretary to discuss the issues surrounding our application and possible next steps. Among our application's noteworthy strengths, according to Ms. James, include:

- Well-articulated application that demonstrated the amount of progress the board has made in a short number of years.
- Good presentation of analysis of industry, regional needs, and formation of the "labor market problems" for the region.
- Good overview of strategic priorities and rationales.

We have been designated as a Tier 2 WIB, meaning that our application was very close to final approval. Over the next several weeks, we will be receiving additional, targeted technical assistance from the state, which will be used to strengthen and improve our application. If possible, and a lot depends on the timeliness of technical guidance from the state, my hope would be to have a re-written application for review and approval for our next WIB meeting on June 23rd. We will keep the Board informed of our progress.

Fred also said that he would like to announce that the annual meeting of the **Massachusetts Workforce Board Association**, a statewide collaborative of all 16 WIB regions will be held on May 28th and 29th at the Orchards Hotel in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Among those who we will hear from is State Representative Sheryl Coakley-Rivera, Chair of the House Committee on Labor & Workforce Development. All MVWIB members are invited to attend with special emphasis on representatives of the private sector. More information will be forthcoming in early May. He asked that you contact him if you are interested in representing the MVWIB at this event.

Fred concluded his remarks noting that over the last month, unemployment figures, while still extremely high, are finally showing signs of leveling off. The lower Merrimack Valley service delivery area saw its unemployment rate drop slightly from 9.7% to 9.6%. In fact, 10 of our 15 municipalities had a modest decrease in unemployment. During the same period, the national rate climbed from 8.1% to 8.5%. This may show an early indication that Massachusetts and the Merrimack Valley may be poised to move toward recovery ahead of the rest of the nation...most likely because of the diversity of industries that have developed here. In previous recessions, Massachusetts was always the first to suffer job losses and the last to recover. Perhaps we've grown a more resilient local economy from lessons learned in the past. Only time will tell.

As a final note, as you heard in Cal Williams report from the Youth Council, preparations for the Summer Jobs for Youth Program are underway. Because of the injection of ARRA Youth funding into our region, we are facing the challenge of placing 5 times the number of youth in summer jobs than we normally would. We are also working with cities and towns who have never before been eligible for summer jobs funding. We respectfully ask the board's help in promulgating this program throughout the region. We need employers with a willingness to provide a meaningful work experience for our youth. If you or someone you know fits this qualification, please contact us.

Robert Halpin said that he knows that Fred and his staff are doing a great job and he is confident that we will get to the High Performing WIB certification.

6. Green Jobs Advisory Council

Joe Bevilacqua said that green jobs by whatever name they are called are a critical component of the federal government and the president's desire to put people to work in green jobs protecting the environment and making us less dependent on foreign oil. Joe said that there are immediate opportunities for weatherization of homes and he has had discussions with Community Action Council as many homes are in need.

There are area companies that have green jobs and he referenced things like the need for people to be trained to replace lines when people age out of their jobs. He has asked the other chambers to talk to companies in their regions and also National Grid.

Joe said that he has learned that the east coast has the best wind in the country for wind farms. Wind turbines could power the whole east coast. There are over 1,000 parts that make up a wind turbine and there would be jobs building them.

There are grants available to take gas powered engines out of delivery vehicles and replace them with battery power.

The president and governor are very concerned about energy and are looking at opportunities for the future. To that end, Joe said that we will be forming a committee to research what skills are needed for which green jobs. This will be our number one priority going into 2010.

He then noted the Leanne Eastman and the Haverhill Chamber will be hosting the next meeting in June and thanked everyone who traveled to Amesbury.

Fred Carberry said that as a follow-up on the green jobs discussion we have distributed a handout titled 'green jobs': a workforce system framework for action which will be our guide. He also included a copy of an Eagle Tribune article referencing local companies. This will be an opportunity for small machine shops to capitalize on green jobs. Green jobs will be the new manufacturing as we put things in place as the president and congress have asked.

Fred Shaheen asked if there was information on weatherization for industry and Joe said he would send him some information.

Fred Carberry spoke about a Pathways out of Poverty grant which we partnered on with American Training. This was for green jobs that unfortunately was not funded although he noted that only five were funded statewide.

Mike Sweeney said that with the continued unemployment numbers rising he would like to compliment Chili and his staff on behalf of Mayor Sullivan. This recession is affecting a large portion of society and they are doing their jobs regardless of language or skill barriers.

Mike also said that last night the house passed a veto proof vote to increase the sales tax. We are keenly aware that we need to maintain and grow jobs. He said that we need feedback from the private sector on how the sales tax increase would hurt their business. We are in some ways in competition with Salem, NH and the private sector needs to be heard.

Joe said that the WIB can't take an official position on this issue but individuals could provide feedback to their legislators.

Cal asked board members to take a look at providing summer jobs opportunities this year.

7. Adjournment

Having no further business David Hartleb made a motion to adjourn and Bob Halpin seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Recorder