



**Greater Lawrence Technical School**  
**57 River Road**  
**Andover, MA 01810**

**ANNUAL MEETING**

**Minutes**

**Wednesday, October 19, 2011**

**7:30 AM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Joseph Bevilacqua, Patrick Blanchette, Fred Carberry, Thomas Connors, Ron Contrado, Paul Durant, Julie Gadziala, Gary Hale, Supt. William DeRosa, Robert Ingala, Susan Jepson, Steve Kfoury, Supt. John Lavoie, Peter Matthews, George Noel, Ann Ormond, Kevin Page, Donna Rivera, Jeff Sheehy, Evan Silverio, Nancy Tariot, Stanley Usovicz, Ray Wrobel, Juan Yopez, Bob Westcott, Len Wilson

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Pedro Arce, Wayne Capolupo, Thomas Casey, Michael Collins, James Driscoll, Joe Gangi, Jr., Dr. Lane Glenn, Atty. Robert LeBlanc, Eric Mane, Maria Miles, Margaret O'Neill, Cindy Phelan, Jeff Linehan, Dahianara Moran-Liranzo, Michael Munday, Steve Salvo, Lester Schindel, Michael Strem, Cal Williams

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Arthur Chilingirian, Fran LaCerte, Cindy Key, Amelia Perez del Pulgar, Marie Pierce, Tim Hebridge, Jason Parry, Michael Hunter

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Rafael Abislaiman, Corina Ruiz, Mary Kivell, Deborah Andrews, Odanis Hernandez, Susan Almono

**1. Call to Order**

A quorum being present, Chairman Joseph Bevilacqua called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and called on Superintendent Lavoie.

Superintendent John Lavoie said that he was pleased to see community residents and business and industry partners at the meeting. He said that this is his second year as superintendent and mentioned that he started at the voc thirty-nine years ago as a teacher's aide. Superintendent Lavoie also said that he is a graduate of the school.

He said that there are 1,320 students enrolled and that 79% are from Lawrence, 15-17% from Methuen, 3-4% from Andover and 2% from North Andover. The school's goal is to make sure that their students get the best education and earn a high school diploma and certification. To be successful students need a strong academic background. Students must pass the MCAS and in the past 78% failed but he is pleased to report that now only 2% failed to pass MCAS. He said that the school also provides 19 technical programs. All the programs have advisory committees from specific industry disciplines and 50% of the school's students go on to college. Superintendent Lavoie also reported that

they are growing their evening program and offering more opportunities for science and math to prepare students to be more productive employees. He said that Greater Lawrence Technical School is helping be part of Lawrence's successful turn-around. He said that Greater Lawrence has the best climate for learning of any school and invited folks to take a tour of the building and stop by the open house on November 6<sup>th</sup>.

Joe Bevilacqua said he would like to relay a story of the dedication of the courthouse where the Chamber was asked to sponsor the catering. They wanted a Boston caterer but Joe said if he was sponsoring the catering he would chose his own caterer and he chose Greater Lawrence Technical School who did a fantastic job.

## **2. Approval of Minutes of June 28, 2011**

Chairman Bevilacqua called for introductions and they were made around the table. He then asked for a motion on the minutes of June 28, 2011 meeting.

**Motion by Len Wilson seconded by Patrick Blanchette to approve the minutes of the June 28, 2011 meeting as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.**

## **3. Welcome**

John then introduced Lawrence Mayor William Lantigua who welcomed Undersecretary Michael Hunter and members of the board noting that it is difficult to find people to appoint to the board when the economy is bad. He thanked all members for their service and stated that their efforts were needed. He thanked the new board members for their willingness to serve. He noted that this is a regional board. Mayor Lantigua said that the official unemployment rate is 9.5% in the region and 7.1% in Massachusetts but 17% in Lawrence. He feels that is not an accurate picture as many have exhausted their benefits and gone off the charts. He feels the true unemployment rate is greater than that. He said that money is tight and we need to do more with less. The Mayor said that Superintendent Lavoie is a great leader at Greater Lawrence Technical School and he sees his passion to help the kids.

The Mayor noted that there are two charter schools in Lawrence as well as Notre Dame and Bellesini and Esperanza Academies. The students are the sons and daughters of single mothers and parents who don't speak English. They are succeeding. He asked why other schools are not doing as well. The excuse has always been bad neighborhoods, single mothers and lack of English. The charter schools are doing well and the Community Day Charter School is a model for other cities.

He said that the City of Lawrence is conducting a search for a superintendent who is a reformer. We can do better than we are and that is why we are looking for new leadership. He praised Dr. Bergeron for her work and said his feelings are that we can do a lot better.

As board members may know, the Mayor said that he raised the issue of why good students should not be considered for summer jobs. He is pleased to be able to report that we made it happen. Most youth in the city are poor and he said that economically poor students who are making the effort to work hard and try to do the right thing should be considered for summer jobs as well as those who are at risk. More needs to be done in that area with 17% unemployment.

The Mayor said that we are doing all we can to take care of crime. He said that thanks to the State we have 6 more police and 6 more coming through a grant. Soon we will have a permanent fire chief and that the City recently hired 15 new firefighters. Thanks to Speaker DeLeo and Governor Patrick, there are a lot of good things going on. The new budget and finance director will be starting on the 24<sup>th</sup> and

our worst problems are behind us. He said that he is not a traditional Mayor and likes to be out in the community to see what he can do better. He wants to make sure that the people of Lawrence get the service they well deserve. He said that he is open to suggestions and folks can email him in the spirit of participation. He hopes that we all become cheerleaders for Lawrence.

#### **4. Undersecretary for Business & Economic Development – Michael Hunter**

Joe then introduced Michael Hunter, Undersecretary for Business Development at the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. Mr. Hunter said that the Patrick Administration put together an economic development plan which was passed by the legislature with the help of Senate President Therese Murray and Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo. Mr. Hunter said that it is significant for the state to have an economic plan. He said that there are ways to bolster the economy and he said that Massachusetts is doing better than other areas of the country in this economy.

Mr. Hunter continued stating that the Governor gets it that economic development, education, and workforce development go hand in hand. Over the next few months we will be focusing on several areas and have identified five steps towards a more competitive Massachusetts economy. The first is to advance education and workforce development for middle skills jobs by developing a coordinated workforce development system with clear leadership; improving workforce programs responsiveness; and prioritizing and identifying goals of a STEM Plan that align with middle skill jobs. The second is supporting innovation and entrepreneurship by providing ecosystem support; building and retaining talent for an innovation economy; creating a culture of innovation; and supporting growth to scale. The third step calls for supporting regional development through infrastructure investments and local empowerment by making public infrastructure investments that support regional growth opportunities; creating regional and local economic development teams led by municipal officials who are CEOs for economic development; educating regional and local officials and their staff; and empowering municipal leaders and their staff. He also spoke about introducing a minority business development center to continue to develop capacity working with larger companies that need technical assistance.

Mr. Hunter said that the next step is increasing the ease of doing business by engaging in on-going state regulatory review; realigning business development efforts; and enhancing and marketing the strengths of doing business in Massachusetts. Finally, the last step is addressing our cost competitiveness by containing the increasing cost of health care with a focus on quality while considering the impact on business; reducing energy costs while creating a diversified energy portfolio that balances competitive pricing with sustainability; minimizing the impact on business of the cost of state and local government; and making the tax structure simple, competitive, and predictable. Mr. Hunter said that he is excited about the next couple of years and asked folks to reach out to him with any question or issues.

Joe said that the Governor brought people together to put a plan in place for business and government to work together on economic development.

#### **5 Reports of Committee Chairs**

- *Planning Committee*

Peter Matthews began his report by stating that he would like to review our region's performance during the past fiscal year, which ended on June 30, 2011 and then provide some additional information on each of the customer groups under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Much of this information and

more can be found in the Lower Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Area Fiscal Year 2011 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Report which is included in our meeting packages.

Secondly, Peter said that he would review and ask approval of two policy changes related to our Individual Training Accounts through the Workforce Investment Act. Peter said that under the oversight of the MVWIB, in FY11 ValleyWorks Career Center served: 14,570 total customers, almost 9,000 or 8,927 were new in FY11. 61% of almost 15,000 customers were new; 1749 employers were served, of whom 443 were new. The ValleyWorks Career Center served 858 veterans in FY11, and attained the highest entered employment number in the State for that group. 283 Veterans gained employment at an average wage of \$20.14 per hour. Nearly 30% of customers served had at least an Associate's degree; 49% of customers were between ages 22 and 45; 40% were over age 46; 94% of customers were currently unemployed and not just underemployed or working part-time jobs; 52% were current UI claimants.

Job seekers who are unable to find employment through our Wagner-Peyser funded job placement services, which are those temporary services provided primarily by career center State employees who determine unemployment insurance eligibility, may be referred for assessment and eligibility determination for additional Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funded services - or for services funded by other sources successfully applied to by the WIB. Wagner-Peyser State staff referred slightly over 1000 people for WIA services. The dramatically different characteristics of the 1041 people enrolled in FY11's three WIA Funded Activities graphically illustrates the diversity of our customer base in terms of their education, occupational skills and work experience. It speaks to the challenges faced in designing activities and in allocating WIA resources that best meet these customers' workforce development needs.

Five hundred seventy one Dislocated Workers received services in 2011. Of these 73% had at least a high school diploma and 32% have completed at least four years of college, 75% were over age 40 and 21% are over age 55, Males comprise 59% of enrollees, and 77% of all 571 people in this category were UI Claimants as of June 20, 2011.

The WIA Adult Program enrolled 283 participants. This so called 'Adult' program provides employment and training services to low income adults who need assistance to become employed. These customers have sometimes been receiving AFDC but some are also former workers unemployed for more than 99 weeks. In this category 68% are under age 40 and 40% are between ages 22-29, 67% of enrollees are female, 80% meet poverty guidelines

One hundred eighty seven youth were enrolled in our WIA Youth Programs. Youth must be low income and have at least one additional barrier as defined by the local WIB: 25% were aged 14-18, 75% were aged 19-21, 80% of enrollees were female, 35% were high school drop outs, 66% had reading or math levels below grade 9.0, 50% were pregnant or parenting, 87% were not enrolled in any type of school. Our Youth service demographics are the ones that we are most immediately trying to change. In this region we've created criteria that makes any economically disadvantaged youth eligible for service. So if a kid is poor but does well in school, we can help him or her. We want to stop being an alternative to high school and we want to help stress the importance of a good high school education as a way to a good job and as a way out of poverty. Peter said that contrary to our service numbers, there are more male school drop outs than female ones and that the young male employment situation is currently worse than that of young females.

At our June meeting, Peter said that he mentioned that the focus of the Planning Committee in FY12 will be ensuring that employment and training services funded through the MVWIB continue to be operated efficiently and effectively. Our primary goal is to ensure that the quality of the services and training provided for job seekers and employers is not compromised while responding to high demand, budget cuts and an uncertain economic climate. The MVWIB and ValleyWorks staff and Planning Committee members continuously monitor and assess these issues at our monthly meetings. This process has led us to the two policy proposals that we are presenting for a vote today.

Proposal #1 will require that a youth possess either a high school diploma or GED to be eligible to receive funding for training through an ITA Training Voucher. Currently our policy is that all youth enrolled in any WIB funded youth activity who does not possess either a high school diploma or GED must enroll in an education program simultaneously. Unfortunately experience has shown that while many youth may complete training and/or obtain employment they do not attain an educational credential. Our High Performing WIB Strategic Plan clearly stated that, at a minimum, the attainment of a high school diploma or GED was a principal goal for youth in our region. In fact, the availability of ITA vouchers for youth without these credentials has actually proved counter-productive to our efforts to provide a pathway leading to long term self sufficiency. We believe that requiring a youth to have attained a GED or High School Diploma prior to obtaining job training will reinforce the importance of remaining in school. Our next step will be to devise ways that help youth who have already dropped out to obtain GEDs and thus become eligible for our ITA services and, more importantly, better jobs. We expect to design options with one common theme. It will be up to individual youth to self-select themselves to succeed at GED training. They will need self-motivation to complete the training. Some limited coaching may be offered but our role will primarily be to offer them the tools for self-motivated study and academic work. We can no longer afford to subsidize self-defeating lifestyles and service approaches where the less motivated receive more help than the more motivated. Both the MVWIB Youth Council and Planning Committee recommend that the Board adopt the following proposal.

"Effective November 1, 2011, no youth will be enrolled in an Individual Training Account (ITA) using Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds unless he or she has either a high school diploma or a GED. Though in-house test results may assess a youth at an academic skill level below that of a high school graduate or a GED holder, a youth testing at grades between 7.9 and 11.9 will be eligible for appropriate WIA-funded ITAs if they possess either credential." Similar grade levels will apply to adults but they will not be required to have HS Diplomas or GEDs.

**Motion by Fred Carberry seconded by Steve Kfoury to approve the ITA Policy Proposal #1 as presented. Motion passed.**

Proposal #2 deals with a reduction in the cap for Individual Training Account vouchers from the current \$8000 to \$6000. The MVWIB has historically had one of the highest training caps in the State. Currently the average ITA requested in the region is between four and five thousand dollars which appears to be consistent across the State. However, recently we have seen that there is a tendency among training providers to design their training options to fit the funding available in a particular region versus a universal shelf price for each activity. Our ITA policy allows for exceptions to the cap if it is justifiable and approved by the Executive Directors of the WIB and Career Center. Approved exceptions are then reported to the Planning Committee. Reducing the cap to \$6000 will allow us to execute the majority of our current ITA requests, while allowing us to more closely monitor and analyze those requests which exceed the CAP amount to ensure that we are getting the best value for our customers both in terms of training and in terms of utilizing our limited available resources. In essence,

if we spend less per trainee, more trainees can be helped. The Planning Committee also recommends adoption of this policy change.

"Effective November 15, 2011, the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Area cap on ITA funding will be \$6,000 until further notice."

**Motion by Bob Westcott seconded by Len Wilson to approve the ITA Policy Proposal #2 as presented. Motion passed.**

Finally, Peter said that if we consider the volume of services that we've been able to provide with less funding, we're off to a good start this year. Unfortunately, the volume we've served also confirms that the regional, state and national employment picture remains difficult. Thus far, from July 1<sup>st</sup> through September 30<sup>th</sup>, 6,610 individuals obtained services at ValleyWorks, including 3100 UI claimants and 437 Veterans. As a hint of a silver lining, there have also been 712 job placements and that represents an increase of 51 job placements over the same period last year. That concluded Mr. Matthews report.

- ***Nominating Committee***

Ann Ormond welcomed the new board members: Brian DePena, Atty. Wendy Estrella, Bob Westcott, Evan Silverio, Dr. Lane Glenn, and Alberto Nunez.

Ann then said that she would like to offer the same slate of officers for election as last year. Joseph Bevilacqua, Chair; Fred Carberry, Treasurer; and Ann Ormond, Clerk.

**Motion by Steve Kfoury seconded by Len Wilson to elect the slate of officers (Joseph Bevilacqua, Chair; Fred Carberry, Treasurer; and Ann Ormond, Clerk). Motion passed unanimously.**

- ***Youth Council***

In the absence of Cal Williams, Howard Allen gave the Youth Council report. He said that the Career Center provided summer jobs to 303 youth from Lawrence (213), Haverhill (67), North Andover (1) and Methuen (22) at 50 worksites. These jobs were subsidized through many of the following program funding sources.

He explained that the objective of the Bridging the Opportunities Grant program is to provide youth who are involved in the MA Department of Youth Services with the work readiness skills necessary for career success through a positive youth development approach. We asked for the maximum amount of \$60k, and were granted \$50k, so we have made the required adjustments to fit the budget. The goal of the 2011-2012 Year-Round YouthWorks program is to provide 30 youth from Lawrence High School with comprehensive career development services that will prepare them for entry into the workforce, whether after high school or after post-secondary education or training. Our priority populations are in-school-youth who are over-age and/or under credentialed. Many of our partners are offering career exploration workshops for the group. Northern Essex Community College, Whittemore Company, Lawrence General Hospital, and Cal Williams are presenting this week. These workshops are interactive and are exciting the students. We also have jobs from many of our partners that will provide practical application of the skills they have learned. These jobs are subsidized by our funding sources.

The next program Howard reported on was the ARRA JAG Funding Summer 2011 – Some of this funding was used for summer jobs and some will be used to offer subsidized jobs to Year-Round YouthWorks in-school students. The Connecting Activities program goal is to support college and career

readiness by providing students with high quality “work and learning” experiences and other career development activities that are focused on school-wide efforts to raise graduation rates. Priority must be given to students most in need of support in order to graduate from high school with the academic and career readiness skills necessary for postsecondary success. At this point we have 41 enrollees and expect close to 300 by the end of the fiscal year. Howard said that we are still in need of 8-12 week subsidized jobs and unpaid internships for some of these programs. He asked members to contact Deborah Andrews, Youth Program Manager, for more information.

## **6. Report of Executive Director**

WIB Executive Director Rafael Abisblaiman said in the interest of time he would go through his power point presentation quickly and anyone wishing a copy could let him know and he would email it to them. He stated that there are 16 WIBs in the state and highlighted their role of monitoring the regional workforce system. The WIB charters our career center ValleyWorks Career Center in collaboration with the state Division of Career Services. The MVWIB/VWCC partners with state and federal workforce systems, businesses, regional non profits and local colleges as well as the public school system. Rafael talked about our organizational chart and board committees. He referenced several charts and identified the MVWIB key industries as Health (and Bio-Science), Advanced Manufacturing, and Green Industries (including environmental remediation). As discussed earlier in the meeting, he said that the Planning and Youth Committees expanded the eligibility barriers to help remind youth that educational achievement and effort are rewarded. Another chart illustrated the importance of education in Massachusetts by percentages with Massachusetts ahead of the rest of the country. There were charts on occupations generating new jobs by 2016 and also the fastest growing industries and occupations. Rafael also spoke about the occupations projected to lose the most jobs by 2016. He noted that the Massachusetts economy is expected to expand by 6.3% by 2016 and technology advances will spur the demand for more highly educated workers.

Ralph continued his presentation stating that the Merrimack Valley Workforce Area Employment chart highlights that manufacturing is our largest employer with the second highest paying jobs. The United States has 20% of manufacturing and China has 19.8% so we still lead but not by much. Manufacturing in the Merrimack Valley constitutes 16% of area jobs but about 30% of the cash income - it is important for the region to stay strong. Rafael also said that health care in another field that continues to grow. He talked about unemployment statistics in the region and Ralph referenced a letter that the MVWIB Mayor/CEO Lantigua sent to the State House leadership to expand opportunities for economically disadvantaged youth to participate in YouthWorks. This resulted in a change to the eligibility criteria.

The next chart was on the number of job vacancies in major industry sectors. Joe Bevilacqua said that people need the skills to fill these jobs as most jobs are happening now through attrition and not expansion. Ralph then spoke about the client flow and mentioned that wages are high in the IT field.

Joe said that with the High Performing WIB initiative and the tremendous partners working together with us, the goal is to provide opportunities to for workers going forward. He thanked Superintendent Lavoie for hosting today’s meeting and then called for a motion to adjourn.

## **7. Adjournment**

**Having no further business Ray Wrobel made a motion to adjourn and Ron Contrado seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*  
Recorder