



**Salvatore's Conference Center**  
**354 Merrimack Street**  
**Lawrence, MA**

**ANNUAL MEETING**

**Minutes**  
**Tuesday, October 5, 2010**  
**7:30 AM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Howard Allen, Joseph Bevilacqua, Patrick Blanchette, Fred Carberry, Thomas Casey, Supt. William DeRosa, Paul Durant, David Hartleb, Robert Ingala, Mayor William Lantigua, Atty. Robert LeBlanc, Michael Munday, Ann Ormond, Peter Matthews, Kevin Page, Donna Rivera, Michael Strem, Cal Williams, Ray Wrobel, Len Wilson, Juan Yopez

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Kimberly Abare, Pedro Arce, Wayne Capolupo, Ron Contrado, Michael Collins, Thomas Connors, Leonard Degnan, James Driscoll, Howard Flagler, Mark Forman, Julie Gadziala, Barbara Grant, Joe Gangi, Jr., Gary Hale, Susan Jepson, Jeff Linehan, Sal Lupoli, Maria Miles, John Olenio, Andres Rodrigues, Margaret O'Neill, Cindy Phelan, Steve Salvo, Lester Schindel, Fred Shaheen, Jeff Sheehy, Stanley Usovicz

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

EOLWD Undersecretary Jennifer James, Barbara Zeimetz, Arthur Chilingirian, Dawn Beati, Lisa Coy, Kelley D'Arcangelo, Joe Eid, Gary Fountain, Cynthia Key, Fran LaCerte, David Souza, Heidi Riccio, Irene Chalek, Linda Piergeorge, Beverly Salvo, April Lyskowsky, Dan Bush, Kathleen Howe

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Rafael Abislaiman, Elizabeth Kirk, Mary Kivell, Deborah Andrews, Corina Ossers, Ruth Marrero, Susan Almono

**1. Call to Order**

A quorum being present, Chairman Joseph Bevilacqua called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and asked board members to introduce themselves. Joe said that the Mayor has been very helpful in moving the WIB forward and then introduced Lawrence Mayor of Lawrence William Lantigua, Chief Elected Official.

**2. Welcome & Introductions**

The Honorable William Lantigua, Mayor of Lawrence and Chief Elected Official, began his remarks welcoming everyone to the great city of Lawrence. He talked about a recent Planning Committee meeting he attended. One of the items on the agenda was an issue he has raised in the past. It is why kids who are good and do everything right don't qualify for summer jobs. He said that the

Youth Council recommended adding some eligibility requirements as a means to reach more kids. He sees this is a big plus and thanked everyone on the committee for their hard work.

Mayor Lantigua then thanked Jennifer James for providing assistance to the WIB. He noted that the Lawrence unemployment figures are still up while other towns have gone down and the Mayor said that is why we are here today. He said that we are ready to do whatever we need to do to continue to bring unemployment down not only in the Valley but especially in Lawrence. Mayor Lantigua said that he will be calling on the Governor, Undersecretary and board members to come up with some creative ideas on how to reduce unemployment in Lawrence. He mentioned that November 2<sup>nd</sup> is Election Day. He continued stating that he worries about unemployment every day. People come into his office daily and the reality is that the city is really hurting although he is doing everything possible to hold things together.

Mayor Lantigua then reported that along with Patrick Blanchette, Lawrence Economic Development Director, and his Chief of Staff Lenny Degnan, he has been going to Chamber events to reach out to employers. They have also visited companies that reside in Lawrence and have convinced four to remain in the city. The Mayor said that they are actively seeking companies that want to grow.

### **3. Report of Chair**

Joe Bevilacqua thanked the Mayor for his leadership of the WIB. He talked about the construction at Riverwalk which is Phase 2 with \$35 - \$50M invested. He also talked about Juan Yepez who has another development on Island Street. There are great things happening here and in other communities in the Valley.

Joe said that the majority of efforts have been on the summer youth program that was finally approved and which Governor Patrick called us directly to urge us to put kids back to work. There were some restrictions on who could be hired. We have also worked on the eligibility restrictions. Joe said that additionally we have more events planned around education working with our community colleges on career ladder pathways. Joe continued stating that the High Performing WIB (HPW) has taken a tremendous amount of time developing the strategic plan for the WIB going forward. Joe said that Jennifer James has been a true mentor during this process and has been available throughout the entire process.

As WIB staff worked on the HPW initiative, the Career Center and WIB office continued to serve thousands each and every day in Lawrence and Haverhill Career Centers. He urged the board members to visit the Career Centers and see the faces of the people we serve.

Joe said that he would like to recognize Len Wilson who has served as the state and national WIB Chair. Joe said that we need to mirror what is happening in Washington. Joe said that workforce development and economic development go hand in hand and we are taking the same path as we are experiencing the worst recession since the great depression.

He did note that Massachusetts has fared better than other states thanks to the state leadership. Joe also reported that as co-chair of the state WIB, he was able to bring National Association of Workforce Board Chairs Annual Conference not only to Massachusetts, he was able to bring them to Lawrence for a side conference where they listened to a presentation on what we are trying to do in Lawrence and the Merrimack Valley regarding workforce and economic development. He said that

many folks said that they wished some of the things happening here were happening in their state. These were the state chairs and executive directors across the country.

**4. Approval of Minutes of June 24, 2010**

Joe then called for a motion on the minutes of June 24, 2010 meeting.

**Motion by Cal Williams seconded by David Hartleb to approve the minutes of the June 24, 2010 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.**

**5. Keynote Speaker – Jennifer James, Undersecretary of Labor & Workforce Development**

Undersecretary James apologized on behalf of Secretary Goldstein who was unable to attend asked her to express her greetings. She said that she wanted to talk about her thoughts on where we are in our economy and how it affects the workforce system. She said that this is an opportunity for her office to hear more about the challenges facing this region. As folks have been reading in the news, Massachusetts has been doing a bit better with a seventh month of job growth adding 65,000 jobs since December, 2009. She said that she has worked for three governors and has had five bosses since beginning eight or nine years ago. She said that we survived the last recession and are doing better coming out of this recession. The good news is that there is Job Quest which is a job listing for job seekers. There are 25,000 jobs listed on Job Quest with 200 in the Merrimack Valley. Ms. James did note that most require a skill and a certificate or degree. The listings are in health care, engineering, system analysis and some sales. We have been looking at changes in jobs here and looking at training policies to encourage more growth in health care, technology and green jobs.

When we think about 8.8% unemployment the rate doubles with the people coming into the Career Center. There are still 300,000 individuals collecting and not currently exhausted. When the unemployment extension happened this summer, there were 210,000 people coming in waves to the Career Center.

Jennifer continued stating that the most important customer, as the Mayor stated, is the work of economic development and working with employers in different ways. Despite the numbers looking for work, employers want to add employees but the cost of hiring is overwhelming. We are looking at allowing UI claimants to go to employer training programs part time for up to six weeks (a facilitated intern program) for on the job training in health care with the option for being hired. We need to recruit employers and get them engaged. She said that for those who don't qualify the Merrimack Valley pilot initiative helps assess clients for work readiness in literacy and numeracy and remediation in a group setting. This will supplement adult education programs.

Jennifer said that the High Performing WIB Review Team will be set up this week. We needed some strategic goals clarified and some revisions. Other regions also worked on revisions in addition to the Merrimack Valley. We will also be reviewing Boston, Brockton, the Cape & Islands and a few others. Bristol and South Coastal opted not to participate. In the spring there will be a final request for all boards in the state to be HPW certified. We anticipate working and finishing the administrative work over the next two weeks. She also encouraged the WIB to invite their colleagues to meetings on health care and manufacturing to share ideas

She said that was pleased to have this dialogue and is available for questions and ideas from the board.

Joe said that the WIB had to certify that HPW plan was board conceived and driven. The Executive Committee has been meeting to verify this. He invited board members to the Chamber Expo and the Workforce Board Association meeting prior to the Expo on Thursday, October 7<sup>th</sup>.

Joe also reported that on October 22<sup>nd</sup> there will be an event to kick-off a partnership program between Northern Essex Community College and Middlesex Community College. He also said that we would be meeting with the vocational schools to discuss health care programs.

## **6. Reports of Committee Chairs**

### **• *Planning Committee***

Peter Matthews said that the fourth quarter Career Center Performance Report is contained in the meeting packets. This report includes adjusted WIA Title I performance goals for adults, dislocated workers and youth. Due to the downturn in the economy, the State entered into negotiations with the Department of Labor to adjust performance goals for FY2010 and FY2011.

He continued stating that the Career Center served over 14,000 total job seekers, more than 7,000 of whom were UI Claimants. The Career Center provided services to just under 2000 area employers, with over 800 representing critical or emerging industries. Total entered employments stands at 2402, which is a commendable 104% of plan.

Peter said that the performance numbers for the Title I Adult Program continue to reflect the struggling economy. We enrolled 251 participants. Of these participants, 25% lack a high school diploma or GED and 62% are Basic Skills Deficient. Total exiters stand at only 96, which is 53% of plan and indicates the difficulty we are having finding employment for this population. The entered employment rate reflects the number of exiters who have found employment. Our entered employment rate goal for FY2010 was adjusted from 75% to 65%. Our actual entered employment rate is 73%, which means we have exceeded the adjusted goal of 65%.

Performance numbers for the Dislocated Worker population are much better. This population is much better educated; only 10% are high school drop-outs and 45% are college graduates. We enrolled 516 participants, exited 252 and found employment for 186. Our entered employment rate for this population is 74%, which is 106% of the adjusted planned goal.

The Youth Program continues to struggle, with 191 customers enrolled, which is only 65% of plan. We enrolled only 58 new participants and carried in 133. We exited 86 and found employment for 56, giving us an entered employment rate of 65%, which is less than our adjusted planned goal of 71%. He said that this is a very difficult population to serve, with 40% being high school drop-outs and 69% being Basic Skills Deficient.

Peter said that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act allowed us a unique opportunity to provide group training for Adults and Dislocated Workers and to fund training programs that would help close the skills gap in the Merrimack Valley. We asked training providers to develop new, innovative training programs that meet the needs of the employers in our region, with a special focus on critical and emerging industries; and that provided participants with industry recognized credentials. Five group training programs are now underway: Automotive Technician with 12

participants; Emergency Medical Technician, the first of three cycles with 10 participants; Pharmacy Technician, the first of two cycles with 14 participants; Machine Shop Practices, the first of two cycles with 11 participants; Green Handyman, the first of two cycles with 8 participants. When all the training is completed, we will have trained approximately 111 unemployed individuals.

Peter continued stating that in order to provide youth services and job training to additional needy and deserving youth, the Planning Committee, with a recommendation from the Youth Council, voted to expand the eligibility criteria for youth interested in job training by adding additional eligibility barriers. WIA regulations require youth to be low income and have one of the following barriers to be eligible for training: School Drop-out; Deficient in Basic Literacy Skills; Homeless, Runaway or Foster Child; Ex-offender; Pregnant or Parenting. Local WIB regions are allowed to add additional barriers with approval from the State. The Youth Council recommended adding the following barriers and the Planning Committee voted its approval: youth resides in a designated poverty area census tract; youth is part of a non-traditional household; youth is a public housing resident. By adding these barriers, we will be able to assist disadvantaged youth who have worked hard, stayed in school and stayed out of trouble.

As was previously stated, due to the poor economy, the State entered into negotiations with the Department of Labor to adjust performance goals for FY2010 and FY2011. For FY2011, our entered employment goals for adults, dislocated workers and older youth are 68%, 72% and 74% respectively. Presently, the entered employment rate for ITA vendors in our WIB region is 75%, the highest in the State. If training vendors do not achieve the 75% entered employment rate, approval of their programs is in jeopardy. This is a time when we are trying to expand our vendor base and encourage vendors to develop new and innovative programming. To be reasonable and fair and to encourage new training vendors, the Planning Committee voted to adjust the entered employment rate for ITA training vendors from 75% to 70%.

- ***Youth Council***

Youth Council Chair Cal Williams reported that at the first Youth Council meeting of FY2011, members reviewed their statutory charge and responsibilities. The youth council is responsible for: Coordinating youth activities in the Lower Merrimack Valley Region; developing portions of our WIB plan related to eligible youth, as determined by the chairperson of the MVWIB; recommending eligible youth service providers in accordance with WIA section 123, subject to the approval of the MVWIB; conducting oversight with respect to eligible providers of youth activities in the MVWIB region, subject to the approval of the MVWIB; and carrying out other duties, as authorized by the chairperson of the MVWIB, such as establishing linkages with educational agencies and other youth entities.

Cal then spoke about the OSY programs noting that with so many experienced adults looking for work, the out of school youth in our recent group health training programs had difficulty finding training related jobs. One such group program was awarded second year funding. Because of ongoing uncertainty in the job market, the Youth Council recommended that the enrollment numbers for the funded program be maintained at the current 8 student level and not raised to the twelve as in the first year contract. The Planning Committee followed our recommendation and the program is funded to run with eight enrollees. The vendor and Career Center have not found it easy to find appropriate candidates for this program.

There have also been issues filling the OSY Education and EMT Program. Any appropriate youth have been enrolled in the adult EMT program to pursue the similar training. Cal said that we feel that the economy is partly the problem, but we also know that we are in need of more training programs that pique the interest of young men. Our young male to female service ratio is 15/85. The Career Center and vendor are also having difficulty recruiting for a culinary arts program.

We have been told by former vendors and others, including the Mayor of Lawrence, that the barriers the youth must meet are too stringent. They would like to serve other economically disadvantaged youth. To that end, in September the Youth Council recommended and the Planning Committee passed a change that will allow us to accept more economically disadvantaged youth into our training programs.

WIA regulations require youth to be from low income families and have one of the following barriers to be eligible for training: School Drop-out; Deficient in Basic Literacy Skills; Homeless, Runaway or Foster Child; Ex-offender; Pregnant or Parenting. Local WIB regions are allowed to add additional barriers with approval from the State. In September, the Youth Council recommended and the Planning Committee passed the addition of the following barriers to our eligibility criteria: 1.) youth resides in a designated poverty area census tract; 2.) youth is part of a non-traditional household; and 3.) youth is a resident of public or subsidized housing.

Cal said that economically disadvantaged youth in any one of these new barrier categories will be eligible for training and services. By adding these barriers, we will be able to assist more economically disadvantaged youth. More Youth will have access to education and training programs at a variety of vendor sites.

Cal also reported that 259 youth were employed this summer at 76 worksites in the Merrimack Valley. They earned a total of \$287,238 to help support their families and themselves. The young people became more work ready. Their employers were very impressed and satisfied with their young workers. Cal said that we are grateful to Mayor Lantigua for taking the lead in the YouthWorks Summer Jobs Program, as well as to Mayor Fiorentini and Mayor Manzi for supporting the youth in their communities. He said that we also thank our MVWIB members who provided jobs for youth this summer.

- ***Nominating Committee***

Ann Ormond, Chair of the Nominating Committee, stated that the following names have been brought forward for membership on the MVWIB. Nancy Tariot, nominated by DESE, Evan Silverio, and Steven P. Kfoury, nominated by Mayor Lantigua and Joseph Bevilacqua.

**Motion by Cal Williams seconded by Robert LeBlanc to approve the nominations of Nancy Tariot, Evan Silverio, and Steven P. Kfoury for appointment to the board. Motion passed.**

## **7. Election of Officers**

Ann said, on behalf of the nominating committee, she would like to present the following slate of officers for board approval. Joseph Bevilacqua, Chair; Fred Carberry, Treasurer; and Ann Ormond, Clerk.

**Motion by Len Wilson seconded by Mike Munday to elect the slate of officers as presented. Motion passed unanimously.**

## **8 Report of Executive Director**

WIB Executive Director Ralph Abislaiman gave a power point presentation. He said that the new economic development staff, under the direction of Mayor Lantigua, is working on goals along with the WIB to improve this region's business and employment outcomes. Ralph said that navigating the unemployment job descriptions and matching people to opportunities in this difficult time is not an easy task. He thanked the Career Center and their employees for providing information and doing an outstanding job noting that there is always room for improvement. Under employer information there were 2,546 more employer contacts in FY'10 and 806 employers served who were new to the Career Center. Of those employers served, 729 had jobs in critical industries and there were 480 job orders.

Job Seekers numbers are different but not a good as they could be and Ralph said that we will attempt to address that in the coming year. A total of 14,152 customers were served including 1,149 veterans. Ralph said that one half of training dollars go to health care with most positions entry level. The second highest training is administrative which consists of mostly entry level clerks in various industries. The third is manufacturing which is growing. Ralph then highlighted a grid of ITA customer Training Enrollment and Placement by Sector. He said that the left column is intake and the right column is placements. There were 140 placements in ITAs in training related jobs. He said that ITAs are customer choice and we need to know where the jobs are to guide clients. He said that IT and computer related jobs pay well. The highest was manufacturing and Ralph thanked board member Mike Munday of Arwood Machine for coordinating a survey of manufacturers. He said that we have received nine responses. He said that health care is second to last in wages and we spend one half of our training dollars on this. IT jobs pay \$25 per hour and manufacturing almost as much.

Ralph then thanked everyone for coming and Fred Carberry for the work he did before Ralph came on board. He also thanked the committee chairs for their commitment to the WIB.

Joe said that we are making good headway not only putting people to work but at good wages. He then thanked board members and said that with their help we would see that people got the training and education they deserve. He said that at Work Readiness Certificate is the calling card to open the door for individuals and that OJT is another avenue we will be focusing on.

## **9. Adjournment**

**Having no further business Peter Matthews made a motion to adjourn and Cal Williams seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Mary Kivell*  
Recorder