



Northern Essex Community College
Hartleb Technology Center (TC103A)
100 Elliott Street
Haverhill, MA 01830

QUARTERLY MEETING

Minutes
Tuesday, January 24, 2012
7:30 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Fred Carberry, Ron Contrado, Paul Durant, Sr., Atty. Wendy Estrella, Dr. Lane Glenn, Gary Hale, Supt. William DeRosa, Peter Matthews, Michael Munday, George Noel, Kevin Page, Jason Parry, Michael Strem, Nancy Tariot, Juan Yepez, Bob Westcott, Cal Williams, Ray Wrobel

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Pedro Arce, Joseph Bevilacqua, Patrick Blanchette, Wayne Capolupo, Thomas Casey, Michael Collins, Brian DePena, Susan Jepson, Steve Kfoury, Supt. John Lavoie, James Driscoll, Julie Gadziala, Joe Gangi, Jr., Robert Ingala, Atty. Robert LeBlanc, Eric Mane, Maria Miles, Alberto Nunez, Margaret O'Neill, Ann Ormond, Cindy Phelan, Jeff Linehan, Dahianara Moran-Liranzo, Donna Rivera, Jeff Sheehy, Evan Silverio, Steve Salvo, Lester Schindel, Stanley Usovicz, Len Wilson, Juan Yepez

GUESTS PRESENT:

Arthur Chilingirian, Fran LaCerte, Francisco Brea, Susan Kanoff, Ellen Weinhold, Linda Piergeorge

STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Barbara Zeimet, Corina Ruiz, Mary Kivell, Odanis Hernandez, Susan Almono

1. Call to Order

A quorum being present, in the absence of Joseph Bevilacqua, Vice-Chair Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:40 am.

2. Welcome

Haverhill Mayor James Fiorentini welcomed board members to the City of Haverhill. He stated that the Haverhill unemployment figure for November 2011 was 7.3%, the lowest in two and one half years and especially good when compared to the post-2008 high of 10.8%. He noted that Haverhill is making progress adding businesses and recognized Ron Contrado for having a business in the City.

He said that, in general, the entire region is heading in the right direction but there are still problems so he plans to go out into the neighborhoods to let people know they haven't been forgotten. He will ask residents what his administration can do to help and what services are needed. He will be taking city

departments with him and said that in the past Arthur Chilingirian has participated in these Mayoral events and made residents aware of Career Center services.

3. Approval of October 19, 2011 Minutes

Peter then asked for a motion on the minutes of the October 19, 2011 annual meeting.

Motion by Fred Carberry to approve the minutes of the October 19, 2011 meeting; George Noel seconded the motion adding the amendment that his name be included in the list of board members present. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Update on Northern Essex Community College

Northern Essex Community College (NECC) president Lane Glenn quoted a Chinese proverb regarding living in 'interesting times' which is both a blessing and curse, especially now in the context of employment and job development. The economy is improving but not fast enough, more students are graduating and more grads are getting jobs, and Community College enrollment is up but there's still much to do.

He said that community college presidents attended a meeting with Governor Patrick and various Secretaries the day before, prior to the Governor's State of the State address. At the meeting, the Governor spoke about expanding the community colleges' role in workforce training to address the nagging skills gap. The Governor also said that he would like to bring the community colleges (CC) under one umbrella like the state universities, though he recognizes that CCs are doing an amazingly good job with short money.

Dr. Glenn said that there's a lot to be encouraged about. CCs provide an avenue toward 4-year degrees to people who would otherwise not go to college. CC's educate more than half of all MA undergraduates and most college-enrolled minorities, veterans, women and people with disabilities Both President Obama and Governor Patrick have said that CCs can be engines of economic growth in their communities. That's been the case for a long time but now it is being better recognized. The Governor also pointed out that State and private industry can do more to help increase CCs contributions.

President Glenn referenced a handout listing the 1,048 NECC degrees and certificates awarded in 2011. The number has been steadily going up and 1,048 is highest number attained in the history of the colleg. Of the 1,048 awards, 621 were 2-year degrees. Over last five years, on average 96% of graduates were employed within one year of graduation and a majority of those were employed in their field of study, which is astonishingly good.

The College has promised its association that it will increase those awards by 50% over ten years - from 996 two years ago to about 1500 eight years from now. But the days of enrollment increases are ebbing because of population changes so new ways are being explored to reach that number.

Nationwide, negative CC graduation rates have been exaggerated because the Federal Government has been basing their numbers on a three year graduation rate and it takes on average seven (7) years to complete a two-year CC degree. That's because people enrolled at CCs are working and raising families.

For many employers, some college is helpful, and if you use that criterion, about 80% of people enrolled in CCs have been helped. On average six hundred NECC students transfer to 4-year colleges every year. When a young person graduates from a four-year college, more than half of them have been to two and sometimes three or more colleges. That has been the case for the last decade. As an example, NECC accepted 8222 credits from other colleges last year.

President Glenn reported that the demolition of the Intown Mall is underway in Lawrence. He presented a power point on the expanding Lawrence campus. Until recently, students had been going to only Lawrence's Dmitri and Haffner-Fournier buildings. But besides those two, many new buildings will soon be coming on-line to provide much better health and other training services. He said that they have obtained the old registry of deeds building which they will probably demolish and use for green space for students. They expect to open a new health and technology center in 2013 which will simulate a hospital environment. A former nearby Audi dealership will host classes for working adults. There are many opportunities to create a vibrant urban campus.

Dr. Glenn said that they are doing energy saving improvements at the Haverhill campus and are looking to work on a downtown Haverhill presence to help with the City's redevelopment.

5 Reports of Committee Chairs

- *Planning Committee*

Peter Matthews was pleased to report that the ValleyWorks Career Center had very fine performance numbers for the year ending June 30, 2011. He said that details are included in the meeting package. The numbers were compiled by the Division of Career Services which is part of the Massachusetts Secretary of Labor's organization.

Peter reported that our region was first in the State for JOB SEEKER OUTCOMES. The Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Area had a 54% job attainment rate and the next highest two regions stand at 52%. This is especially noteworthy because our region has a lot of newcomers with limited English skills and an above average unemployment rate.

The UI CLAIMANT OUTCOME SUMMARY page indicates that, at 56%, we were tied for first with Franklin/Hampshire and Greater New Bedford but we had many more people in this category. Peter continued that we can be especially proud of our veteran job outcomes. We are first in the state and the number of veterans served in this region exceeds all others. He also noted that we have the second highest veteran hourly wage rate in the state and the second highest percentage of employed recently separated vets. Although we're in second place in percentage terms, we have many more veterans served and placed than other regions. First place Boston only had 4 recently separated veterans employed while we had 45. Our average hourly wage rate is also higher than Boston's and higher than the State average.

He next reviewed the Dislocated Worker EMPLOYMENT RETENTION RATE IN THE SECOND & THIRD QUARTER AFTER EXIT. Dislocated Workers defined as those who lost their jobs within the last 99 weeks and who receive intensive Career Center services. We've got the second highest in the state in that category and well above the state average. Dislocated Worker employment one quarter after exit has us in the upper half of all WIBs and above the State average.

Under the adult category, which describes people who have not worked or who have not worked for at least 99 week, we have the 5th highest adult entered employment rate out of the State's 16 Workforce Investment Areas. The next pages describe our Adult category customers. Our region's high school completion rate is tied for last and it has the third highest rate of people with below 9th grade math and reading levels. It also has the highest welfare rate in the State. But of the Commonwealth's 16 workforce investment areas, our adult entered employment rate is 5th highest and the hourly wage earned in this category is only slightly lower than the State average. The final page titled Ethnicity indicates that our region has the highest percentage of Hispanic or Latinos in the State. This report again confirms that Latinos have a much more than average desire to work. The numbers are a credit to both our customers and to ValleyWorks Career Center staff.

Peter outlined a couple of other issues – first, how the Planning Committee had dealt with a recent budget increase and secondly, the motion written in the agenda. Because the Commonwealth requires budget amendments by a certain date, the Planning Committee reviewed and approved a FY2012 Annual Plan Modification allocating an additional \$176,643 in Workforce Investment Act Adult and Dislocated Worker funding. Sixty eight percent (68%) of those additional funds were allocated to training and will result in an additional 35 individual training accounts. Most of the remaining balance went to cover future funding shortfalls. The planning committee is aware that there will likely be additional federal workforce development budget cuts. The size of those cuts remains unknown but they are likely to result in personnel cuts. We will need to cover our share of unemployment insurance for anyone laid off. We allocated about \$20,000 to that contingency.

Peter informed the board that we are now also paying for retiree health care costs. We know that health costs are far outpacing the rate of inflation. We have a graying workforce and do not know when the rise of healthcare costs will moderate. We allocated a few thousand extra dollars to that cost area. It is also likely that existing state and municipal retirement plans will not be able to cover retiree pension costs. Massachusetts is already 16 billion dollars in the hole and there are many states in worse shape. Peter said that we are still unsure about how to deal with this issue.

Because the City of Lawrence is our fiscal agent and because the City depends on State and Federal grants, these fiscal problems are likely to affect us earlier than others but we should remember that these issues are not unique to our region. They are national problems that are fast becoming very serious ones. The planning committee will work with Ralph to keep the board informed of fiscal developments in our area.

Peter then requested that someone make the motion written in the agenda related to academic entrance requirements for Individual Training Accounts.

Motion by Cal Williams to approve the following motion: "We affirm that the WIA-funded Individual Training Account (ITA) grade 7.9 academic threshold requirement applies to youth, adults and dislocated workers but that adults are not required to have either a High School Diploma or a GED". The motion was seconded by Bob Westcott.

Discussion followed with Nancy Tariot disagreeing with the motion and reading the following letter from area ABE vendors to her. Ralph Abislaiman asked that the letter be included in the minutes:

January 23, 2012

Nancy Tariot
ABE Program Director
Community Action, Inc.
145 Essex Street
Haverhill, MA 01832

Dear Nancy,

Since you are the Adult Basic Education (ABE) representative to the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB), we are writing to express our concerns about recent changes that were made to entrance requirements in order for clients to qualify for Occupational Skills training funded through WIA ITA's.

It is our understanding that the new requirements, ranging from requiring all youth to possess a High School Diploma or GED, to achieving minimum scores on TABE Reading and Math of 7.9 for all adults, youths and dislocated workers, have already begun to be enforced by the local MVWIB. As providers of ABE/ESOL instructional services, we are greatly concerned about the negative impacts these policies will have on the populations that we serve. ABE/ESOL students encounter many barriers to employment which ABE/ESOL providers address through literacy development, education advising and support services. Increasing entrance requirements for job training opportunities adds yet another barrier to success for our learner population.

Specifically, our concerns include the following:

- a) All Massachusetts ABE/ESOL programs have been charged with creating a program culture that engages students at all levels to develop college and career readiness, and a program design that "incorporates strategies to support students' progression within the program and to post-secondary education, job training and/or employment leading to family-sustaining wages." These more stringent entrance qualifications for Occupational Skills training will seriously impact our students' outcomes in negative ways. Most importantly, this will severely limit the opportunities for those most in need of job training and family-sustaining wage employment, and virtually eliminate most, if not all, of our current population from participating.
- b) Requiring youth applicants to be in possession of a GED or High School Diploma will increase the demand on GED preparation classes and GED Test Centers. The ABE field is already operating under serious financial constraints, with large waitlists for instructional services, and this will only increase the strain on our limited services and funding systems.
- c) The requirement of minimum TABE scores at a 6.9 – 7.9 level now and soon to be exclusively 7.9 or above essentially eliminates many if not most ESOL applicants from training programs. We are questioning the rationale of this change, since we are aware that some training vendors whose programs do not have these higher entrance requirements do successfully place their participants in training related jobs and that these are life changing for the participants.
- d) This policy change directly contradicts MVWIB's own recommendation as outlined in their April 2007 "MVWIB Blueprint Update;" i.e., that "Given the high dropout rate in Lawrence, out of school youth should be one of the highest priority populations to target for workforce development services in the region. (p.13)"
- e) We understand that these new requirements were developed with the intent of increasing positive training program outcomes - with the reasoning being that if a participant's skill level is higher going into a workforce training, the outcome will be consequently higher. We are concerned that these more stringent requirements will effectively "lock out" or exclude a large portion of the Merrimack Valley

residents in need of training, whose unemployment levels are higher than the state average. We believe that these new requirements do not address the current realities and workforce development needs in our communities. As a result, many residents will be trapped in low-income, low-skilled jobs, and unable to break the cycle of poverty. At a minimum, dual enrollment in ESOL, GED or ABE with job training should have been included in the new policy. We also question why ABE programs were not asked for input into this important policy change, given that it would greatly affect their adult learner population, who are the potential workforce in the Merrimack Valley.

- f) We believe that the new requirement for youth applicants, while admirable “to help remind youth that educational achievement and effort are rewarded (MVWIB Annual Meeting Presentation 10-19-11, p.18),” there are, again, no direct correlations that this higher standard will indeed achieve the desired outcome of reducing the dropout rate. No evidence-based research has been put forth to indicate a direct and valid correlation between the two, which leads us to question how this decision was made.
- g) We believe that these revised policies will particularly impact residents of the lower Merrimack Valley, a region which experiences high secondary school dropout rates and low high school graduation rates. This region also experiences large populations of low English-proficient speakers of other languages, many of whom are illiterate in their native language. These populations are in desperate need of these training programs as paths to more successful economic futures for both themselves and their families.
- h) We are concerned that these policies were uniquely implemented by the MVWIB, and we are not aware of similar policy changes in other WIB regions across the Commonwealth. We can appreciate the MVWIB's intention to create more positive outcomes, yet we question the equity when this appears to be regional policy and decision not imposed elsewhere in Massachusetts.

We respectfully request that the MVWIB reconsider its current policy and consider how this policy will decrease opportunities for local residents, reinforce poverty, limit access to participation in economic growth opportunities and put additional strain on an already overloaded ABE delivery system. We would be interested in hearing back their response to our concerns.

Respectfully yours,

The undersigned Directors of Adult Basic Education Programs

Betsy Leeman, Asian Center of Merrimack Valley
Janet Fischer, Lawrence Adult Learning Center
Luisa Santiago, International Institute of Greater Lawrence
Sr. Eileen Burns, SND, Notre Dame Education Center, Lawrence
Irene Chalek, Northern Essex Comm College
Ruth Byrne, Methuen Adult learning Center

cc: Andrea Perrault, ACLS
Anne Serino, ACLS
Bob Bickerton, DESE

Peter said that he would ask Ralph to speak on this matter adding that the changes came through the Planning Committee and that the Committee's intent is similar to that of the ABE providers. The Committee also wants to raise HS diploma and GED completion rates. The Planning Committee's recommendation was based on the idea that it's a disincentive to provide GED training alongside occupational skills training because once youth got jobs, they stopped preparing to pass the GED.

Nancy added that she was impressed by Dr. Lane's presentation and that it may also take seven or eight years for someone to get a GED. People without GED aren't stupid or lazy but need help because

they couldn't meet the new high school MCAS requirements and because they can't get a GED after a short six or eight week course.

Barbara Zeimetz stated that the WIB had received an email from the State inquiring about the vendor letter about a month ago and that she had responded to the state's questions at that time. Barbara stated that the MVWIB had not seen the letter Nancy had just read until today.

Barbara said that one reason for the change in the eligibility criteria was that our data indicated that youth trainees were leaving training once they got a job and that they were not getting their GEDs. Both through the high performing WIB process and at many meetings, the WIB has encouraged ABE vendors and schools to work with us to get additional services for young people to get high school diplomas and, if not that, GEDs.

We all have major funding concerns. ABE vendors get \$30 million from the state for ABE and there is a wait list. The workforce development system's funding situation is severe and we cannot continue to provide basic skills funding out of our WIA grant, especially when past efforts have not been especially successful.

In a recent 5-year MA Department of Training RFP, the MVWIB requested that vendors address low basic skills amongst youth, many of whom have graduated and hold high school diplomas. We have not eliminated GED training from all of our programs but have recommended that new restrictions be put in place for WIA because of its diminishing dollars and questionable outcomes.

HS diplomas or GEDs are the minimum credentials needed to be successful in the workplace and we want to get that point across. People who enter our programs with low literacy or English levels have not been especially successful in attaining them. We moreover have to make choices when our funding is being reduced.

Separate ABE funding is available to address literacy and ESOL needs. The workforce development system cannot solve ABE problems when there are so many people who are unemployed. For adults, we're not saying that they have to have a high school diploma or a GED, but that they now need to be at least at the 7.9 grade academic grade level to get job training. Workforce development money is being decimated at the same time that we're being inundated with unemployed people. 15,000 people came into our career center last year and we need to help them get jobs...and we don't have seven years to help them.

Nancy said that a 7.9 on a T.A.B.E. test is a high score and when client get to 7 they cannot continue in ABE programs. She said that she feels that the policy change for adults excludes a lot of people in need of services.

Barbara said that our job is to provide training in a variety of specific job skills for occupations in which our customers can get jobs. Colleges face similar situations - they cannot have some people in their college courses because they do not meet required academic levels. All of us are all in the same boat doing the best we can. There needs to be a continuum of steps and collaborative progress at different sites and levels. If we accept unprepared people when there is high unemployment both they and we will be unsuccessful.

Gary Hale of MA Rehab said that he would like to weigh in on Nancy's side of the issue. His agency supports a huge population of people who need to get GEDs. A great success rate is important to all but we should also be concerned about raising standards higher than those of the training programs themselves. The policy change affects people with disabilities. If we only focus on people who can move on because they have HS diplomas or GEDs we are making a mistake because some people have to work before they obtain either credential. We're excluding those people and we should not forgot them but instead make their next step-up available to them.

Barbara Zeimetz said that we haven't forgotten about anybody. We will continue to serve those people through programs like Trade and National Emergency Grants. Policy changes have been driven by changes in the economy and because there are now many more people in need. We are not saying that adult must have a HS diploma, but that they must have reached at least the 7.9 grade level.

Nancy said that she agreed with Gary and that the new policy excluded many people and that those people will be driven to ask for welfare. She asked if we could look at the policy again and discuss it with those vendors who are involved in the issue.

Lane Glenn stated that we should arrive at better ways to coordinate our services and that there are horrible inefficiencies in our systems to which we are all victims. But benefit and cost issues ultimately need to be weighed and decisions made. Several years ago, NECC made the difficult decision to terminate its hard-of-hearing program, which Gary may remember. But it was an outcomes based decision made because the funding being dedicated to it did not match the outcomes. Lane stated that we need to be careful about how we describe the people affected by our decisions and not use terms like "self-defeating life styles" which was mentioned in the MVWIB's last quarterly minutes. Public records should reflect outcomes and not ascribe characteristics to our customers or express opinions or use language that could be dangerous.

Peter Matthews said that with no further discussion he would move the motion for a vote. Motion passed with Nancy Tariot and Gary Hale voting "no."

After Peter recommended its inclusion, members agreed to again discuss the issue at the next meeting.

- ***Youth Council***

Youth Council Chair Cal Williams began his remarks stating that this report will cover three Valley Work Career Center/MVWIB youth programs named ARRA JAG, Pathways and Connecting Activities. Together those programs serve about two-hundred and twenty area youth per year. 97 Lawrence Youth participated in the American Recovery Act JAG work experience program. It gave most of them their first job. After being reminded of some of the basic habits that employers look for and after receiving required safety training, all 97 participants were employed by private and public, for- and non-profit employers.

The organizations who hired them included our host NECC, our Chairman's Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce, and many others. Stating that all involved employers should be recognized, Cal listed them as follows: Apple Wiper, Auto Care, Beacon Courts, the Boys & Girls Club, Cardinal Shoe, Food for the World, Hancock Courts, Lawrence Community Connections, the Lawrence-Methuen Community Coalition, Lawrence Public Schools, Little Deli, the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood Association, Metro Financial Solutions, Neighbors in Need, New Balance Athletic Shoe, Penacook Place, Pinnacle Financial,

Rumbo Newspaper, Saint Vincent de Paul, the YWCA of Greater Lawrence, UPS and your humble Workforce Investment Board. We want to especially thank staff at Lawrence High School, which accepted 43 participants.

Cal also mentioned that Ralph was Chairman of the Lawrence Superintendent Search Committee during the period of the programs and that Barbara and Ralph are currently members of Stakeholder Groups drafting recommendations to address issues at two under-performing academies at Lawrence High School.

Two of the young people in this ARRA subsidized work experience program later got permanent jobs at their subsidized work sites. Those sites are Lawrence YWCA and Apple Wiper. The two young people who got permanent jobs promised to study and get their GEDs. Staff will follow up on this because it's been a problem in the past. As we know, once area youth get their first paying job, many stop advancing academically. In total, more than \$100,000 was paid in youth wages over the course of the program. We as a board would be wise to try increase our post-subsidy employment numbers and bring it up from just two.

The next program is Pathways. In this program staff worked with 10 new and 40 previously enrolled High School and post-HS students in Lawrence and Haverhill. The program's goal is to help them pass the MCAS test after they've failed it at least once. Information on jobs and GED programs were sometimes provided as alternatives – with those alternatives most often provided to older youth with severe English-language barriers. They were also given info on English classes for Speakers of Other Languages. Only eight participants enrolled in this past November's MCAS remediation classes. More participated in a jobs program. Overall, services included referral to other MCAS remediation classes, a free MCAS Math or ELA workbook, and information about MCAS test dates. Post HS students received resume help, other workshops and training resource information, job search assistance and computer lab access. Cal said that the results of the November MCAS test are not yet out and he's inform the board of those results at the next meeting.

The last program reported on was Connecting Activities. Cal said that this program is intended to prepare youth for both college and work. It attempts to leaven the high school curricula's academic focus by focusing students on what employers look for in their employees and by exposing youth to different types of jobs. Our local Connecting Activities program works with Lawrence and Haverhill High Schools and other area secondary schools. There were 67 students enrolled last year and all or almost all received at least one value-added service. These services include employment assistance and referral, labor market information; resume writing and Work Ready Youth workshops.

This year our Connecting Activities program is working with a new year-round YouthWorks program. As you know, in the past YouthWorks provided subsidized employment for youth. Part of that program has been made into a year-round one. In it we had 15 students from Lawrence High School work at public, private and nonprofit agencies including our host Northern Essex Community College, the Lawrence Boys & Girls Club, YWCA, Lawrence High School, J+M Industries, German Home, Lawrence General Hospital and Mary Immaculate Nursing Home. Cal said that we are grateful to all of these employers.

We began the second part of the Connecting Activities program last week with another 18 new students. Out of the 33 students enrolled in Year-round YouthWorks, 6 students have obtained

unsubsidized employment. These results are noticeably better than our summer program and we hope to build on this success.

Cal said that he is pleased to report that, compared to other regions, the ValleyWorks youth staff did extremely well in FY' 11. There were 88 youth exits, which mean that 88 youth no longer need our services right now. Because of the current high youth unemployment rate, eighty two is the second highest older youth exit number in the state. Of these exits, 52 got jobs. That is the highest youth entered employment rate in the Commonwealth. We should also highlight that their average wage is \$11.25 compared to the state average of \$9.50. We also had the highest credential rate in the state at 61. The MVWIB congratulates the ValleyWorks Career Center on their older youth outcomes. We hope to do as well in the youth category next year.

Cal then mentioned that Deborah Andrews, Youth Workforce Program Manager, has resigned her position to take advantage of a new opportunity in Newburyport. We wish her well.

- **Nominating Committee (no report)**

6. Report of Executive Director

WIB Executive Director Rafael Abislaiman stated that our current resources are much less than before 2008, when the bottom fell out of the economy because of the malfeasance of the rich and the exploitation of the poor who were put in houses that they couldn't afford so that others could earn big money. He stated that if we perpetuate past workforce development expectations we'll again be selling poor people down the river. There just isn't enough money to continue business as usual and everyone involved should realize that there must be greater efforts to achieve high school diplomas and if not that, GEDs.

Another example of misusing the poor is the transitional bilingual education program that was done away with a few years back. It was odd that minorities that weren't in the program quickly learned English while the Spanish-speaking who were in the program didn't. Some people back then graduated from high school without having learned English and then enrolled in ABE programs to learn what they should have learned when they were in school. But Spanish speaking people are not less intelligent than any other group and many are victims of programs that were intended to help them but instead delayed their advancement.

Rafael stated that our WIB's CEO is in a unique position because he is the first Hispanic Mayor elected in Massachusetts and that he was personally the first originally Spanish speaking WIB director in the Commonwealth. He stated that he was hired for the job of director because Mayor Lantigua and he agreed that Hispanics need to change how they see themselves in the U.S. and how they are served.

Until recently poor Hispanic kids who were doing well in school were denied summer youth employment because they were doing well in school. To get subsidized summer jobs these economically disadvantaged youth needed to be performing below grade level, or have dropped-out or be in some way court involved. That practice continued after 2008, when minority 16-19 year old unemployment was at about 90%.The MVWIB managed to change that and the rest of the state followed our lead so that poor kids who are now doing well in school are not excluded from subsidized summer employment.

In his twenty years of experience in ABE, Ralph stated that he encountered too many people who thought that not knowing English was some sort of mental disability that required therapy. What non-English speaking people need is good instruction to learn English. The culture now believes that if you're poor you're dysfunctional but the best we can do as public service people is dismiss that and remind people that education creates opportunity.

It is shameful that workforce development system has so often been used as a safety valve for the public school system. The story was that if you can't cut it in the public school you can always go to the unemployment office and they can set you up with training. That's been the norm for many poor youth. We need to change that and make it clear to kids that their job and principal opportunity is learning in school. In Lawrence, people can tell who's going to drop out about two months after they start freshman year. We need to change that.

It's also confusing because our workforce development system is supposed to help make America globally competitive but we've spent the largest chunk of our funding on academic remediation. How can we think that we're adding to our chances of success in the global marketplace if what we do is remediate what should have been taught and learned in the public schools? We don't want to close the door to anyone and if we had all the money in the world we could do all good things to all people but we don't. In a way, hard-working Chinese are now paying for our workforce development efforts.

Ralph stated that we must change our system to help our poor people compete in the global workforce. We need to help the public school system meet this challenge and not help those challenges be ignored. Unless we change, unpatriotic rich people will continue to send their money overseas and poor people will continue to think that they will always have a second chance. That's what workforce development has been - a second-chance system. We need to warn people that our choices as a system and country are narrowing and that there will be fewer second chances.

The right says that there's a lot of duplication so let's help eliminate some of that and focus WIA on helping poor people and dislocated workers who are ready to use our help. There are a lot of those folks nowadays. What we propose to do is triage to help the people who can work go to work quickly and presumably start paying taxes quickly so that we can worry less about getting more billions from the Chinese. At the same time we can work to cooperate with other programs that are intended to serve other people.

Ralph said that ABE programs should be happy about the motion the board has passed because we all recognize the ABE system's role and we look to them to look for and receive more money to help people who need their remedial services. Remedial education is not the role of workforce development system. Our role is to help unemployed people get the jobs that employers have open.

Bob Wescott stated that the discussion seems to point to a distinction between two types of people. There are other similar divisions. People in public schools should use their buildings to provide more remedial services. There's currently a misallocation of funds in some school systems. Andover is preparing to spend \$45m on an elementary school. Expensive school buildings are being built while teachers plead to parents for supplies. Those problems are bigger than our work force development system. The federal government is now providing us with debt. There aren't budget increases coming. We'll never have enough money to meet needs and that message should be getting out to more than just us.

Superintendent William DeRosa from Whittier Regional Technical High School said that his school serves eleven communities with 70% of students coming from Haverhill. He stated that he's concerned about the current conversation on education. His school has a .09 percent drop-out rate, far below the state average. Whittier works very closely with the Haverhill public schools and their intent is also to help their students stay in school and learn. The Haverhill School Committee and Public Schools share that goal. The challenges we're facing involve all of us. Educators in Haverhill are committed to helping kids. Whittier graduates get not only a high school diploma but also occupational certificates. They keep kids in school and offer many in-school and summer remedial programs. They do not give up on freshman or anyone else and what they need is community support. Haverhill recognizes that education is the equalizer in the world of poverty and they work to keep kids in school.

Ralph stated that Whittier does a very fine job and merits congratulation for its outstanding outcomes. He also stated that it is not Lawrence's policy to ease out youth who fail two courses their freshman year but instead that system dynamics often allows youth to more or less give up and later drop-out. He explained that Lawrence youth need more differentiated education. Currently 9% of Lawrence youth are in honors or AP classes and 20% are receiving SPED or enrolled in the remedial 180 program, but another 40% could be doing above average work and they aren't because they are in undifferentiated classes where there are often discipline problems and where insufficient learning occurs. We are all God's children and equal under the law but youth not now interested in going to college should be appropriately challenged so that they can find jobs when they graduate.

Mayor Fiorentini' said that at Haverhill High School many English-speaking kids don't know what the WIB is and they drop-out because they can't get into Whittier. They want to learn vocational skills but can't and he's extremely concerned about that. What services are available for them? Ralph said that they would be eligible for ValleyWorks case management services and assistance to find job opportunities that match their interests.

The Mayor asked what central policy change Nancy is addressing? What would affected youth have been eligible for a year ago to which they now ineligible? Ralph answered that the fundamental change is that the MVWIB is no longer going to fund GED preparation classes with WIA funds. We think that those classes should instead be funded from ABE-related sources. We think that we should instead be funding job-related skill training.

The Mayor asked where school drop-outs will be able to get GED training if there's already a long wait list. Ralph answered that the Commonwealth will increase ABE funding if the political decision is reached to do so. He explained that when he first started in ABE in Lawrence, he thought it was incorrect to have the bulk of ABE funding go to public schools because they were the ones who had often been unable to teach the students who had dropped out. He thought that public resources should best go to private non-profit agencies like Nancy's who can do more with less money.

Nancy stated that all ABE contractors are held to the same standards, including public schools, and that it is incorrect to give the impression that they aren't. Ralph agreed and stated that experience moderated his original point of view but that when he started in ABE the local public school contractor had many public school teachers on staff who had not done well in the K-12 system. That has changed.

Mayor Fiorentini expressed his concern that youth drop-outs will no longer be able to receive WIB sponsored training. He asked members to reconsider the decision, though he understands the impact of fiscal constraints. Ralph answered that we wouldn't be in this situation if we had the funding that we had ten years ago now and that we will be dealing with a lot less funding going forward.

Nancy stated that we all recognize that triage is necessary but stated that the customers the WIB is focused on have other opportunities and resources. They will make it make it no matter what and we should instead be focusing on those who have fewer resources and more barriers. Ralph answered that he doesn't think that it's creaming if we require adult trainees to have at least 7.9 grade literacy and numeracy levels to enter skill training programs and that, today, all limited income youth and adults are at-risk. The world is changing and if we don't change our system to more effectively and efficiently use money, we may be wasting tax payer resources.

Chili said that kids who drop-out of school come to the career center to look for work and not for more education. If they want career center help with their education, ValleyWorks has a computer lab where they can go on-line and study for their GED. One of youth's biggest current problems is that they don't have any work experience. We'll continue to work with all youth to help get them a job. Interested youth will continue to have access to the career center's computer lab if they want to prepare for the GED test.

George Noel, the Massachusetts Secretary of Labor board delegate had two comments. First, Secretary Goldstein will soon be issuing a 21st Century Workforce Development Initiative preliminary report that will focus on workforce development system changes in the light of declining resources. The second is that the UI on-line system is replacing an outdated system. The UI on-line employer component has been in effect since 2009. The new change will hopefully address long lines at the career center and long wait times on the phone. Fewer people will be available to see customers but he wanted to ensure board members that people will continue to be able to see staff one-on-one when necessary. There will just be fewer people taking fewer hand-to-hand UI applications. His Rapid Response team is also training on UI on line.

7. Adjournment

Having no further business George Noel made a motion to adjourn and Fred Carberry seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Recorder