



# YOUTH COUNCIL

## MINUTES

Wednesday, March 9, 2011

11:30 a.m.

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board

439 South Union Street

Lawrence, MA 01843

### **Youth Council MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Howard Allen, Kristine Blum, Lisa Coy, Brad Howell, April Lyskowsky, Megan Shea, Cal Williams

### **MVWIB Youth Council MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Janet Allison, Tom Casey, Irene Chalek, Beverly DeSalvo, Ed Fitzgerald, Howard Flagler, Melanie Mericle, Linda Piergeorge, Heidi Riccio, Barbara Richards, Vinnie Ouellette, Michael Strem, Ed Warnshuis

### **MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:**

Deborah Andrews, Rafael Abislaiman, Odanis Hernandez, Mary Kivell

#### **I. Call to Order**

A quorum being present, Youth Council Chairman Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:50 a.m.

#### **II. Approval of February 9, 2011 Minutes**

Cal then called for a motion to accept the minutes of the February 9, 2011 meeting.

**Motion by Megan Shea seconded by Howard Allen to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2011 Youth Council meeting as submitted. Motion passed.**

#### **III. Legislative Funding Update**

Rafael Abislaiman said that there is plenty of news on legislative funding but the question is what will happen next. House funding for WIA (which is the act we operate under) has been zeroed out. At the Senate level it has been level funded. Ralph said that his guess is that it will be reduced and the two houses will come to some agreement. Funding is \$3,176,000,000 this year and will probably be reduced from that level.

Howard Allen asked about the impact of any cuts and Ralph said that there would be staff reductions and reduced support for vendors. LARE would probably survive but the smaller vendors we have worked so hard to build up may not survive.

Ralph also said that there has been a push to fund Community Colleges with more capacity to do workforce development. In some areas, Community Colleges run Career Centers. This will have significant consequences as the cost of doing business is normally higher at Community Colleges and our other vendors often do more with less.

There have also been attempts to extend the time for training from one year to two years but he doesn't see that happening without a funding increase. With the high unemployment rate, it is not the right time to do two year training. We need to serve more people rather than the same people for a longer amount of time. Ralph likened it to a choice between doing triage or open heart surgery.

Cal Williams asked about funding for Summer Jobs. Ralph said that the Governor has submitted the state budget with level funding for subsidized youth summer jobs along with an additional \$700,000. The Governor hopes to serve about 4,100 kids statewide. He said that is not very many kids when you consider all the poor kids in Lawrence as well as communities that are not getting services.

Megan Shea mentioned that youth violence is a concern. There was discussion about whether funding such as homeland security is available. Megan said that those funds have been put into filling in cuts in law enforcement and statewide the violence programs are funded through the Department of Public Health (DPH).

#### **IV. Program Updates WIA, Externships, Connecting Activities**

Deborah Andrews reported on the Medical Assisting Program stating that 8 were enrolled and the program finishes in April. Three have gotten their GED and 1 has attained a grade level increase. They are working on their internships and one is at Mass General. Only 1 participant left the program.

The first cycle of the Education/Food Service Program has finished. Originally 15 participants were to be enrolled, but the final count was 9. Nine finished with 6 getting jobs, 2 in college and 1 in the military. The second round enrolled 8 and 7 are attending. This is a challenging group but attendance is 80-100%. Most have gotten OSHA certification. One young man with challenges is registered with Mass Rehab, so we are trying to find him some 1:1 help in this program

Howard Allen asked whether there is a feeder into hospital jobs for medical assistants. Deborah said that the proposal must identify potential work sites such as doctors' offices and hospitals. LARE identified those in their proposal. Howard mentioned that today you often have to deal with a physician group and not an individual doctor. Deborah said that employers are looking for experience and the internships are helpful with that.

Deborah reported that Job Shadow Day had 28 companies in Lawrence and Haverhill, both private and public, hosting 51 youth. Deborah also said that Construction Career Day is scheduled for May 5<sup>th</sup> and we can send 80 youth from the high schools in the Valley.

Lisa Coy then reported on a Bridging Opportunities Gap grant which is new funding for ValleyWorks. The Commonwealth Corporation requested that ValleyWorks apply for the grant. There are 10 students enrolled and Lisa said if the program is successful they will reapply in the fall. These are youthful offenders who are in the custody of the Division of Youth Services (DYS). They are 14-18 years old and must be either in high school or in a GED program in order to participate in grant activities.

Lisa and Cristy are providing a 20 hour orientation on work readiness and are looking to get participants subsidized work with a mentor. This is a good collaboration with DHS and NFI who is hired by DHS for auxiliary services. Lisa said that she is also looking into seeing if the DHS education liaison can get the youth school credits for participation in the program.

Howard Allen then reported on the Externship Program. He and Deborah have spoken with 27 Lawrence High School teachers, as well as the administration at Haverhill High. They have all indicated a good level of interest. All high schools in our service area received notification of the program.

Howard noted that we have a tight timeframe for April vacation but said that he is looking for a long term goal of a year round program that would work both in the summer and on weekends and vacations. It would be funded through sponsorships and contributions. When teachers complete their work we pay them up to \$1,050. Howard said that Cal Williams and he had met with the Director of Engineering at UPS in Chelmsford to see if they will accept an intern, or contribute (tax deductible) funding to our externship program, or both.

The next step is to send a proposal to the UPS-related foundation for their consideration. Howard spoke about a Verizon program for ESOL in which they contributed \$2,500 the first year, \$5,000 the second year and now \$75,000 (over three years).

This is an opportunity to grow our externship program, which is STEM related and meant to connect the workplace to the classroom. Howard also talked about a meeting with Mainstream Global, a distribution company for refurbished computers and LED screens and which is looking to open two more companies in South America.

Juan Yopez, who is a member of the WIB, and Luis Yopez are the owners and are very favorable to the externship program and want the right match with the teacher. Howard works with both parties to insure a good match. Frito Lay is also interested and we are working to garner support from other companies. Howard said that he has identified 70 companies willing to talk with us.

Ralph Abislaiman said that the intent of these externships is to modify curriculum to meet workforce needs. Deborah thanked Howard and Cal for their work on this effort.

April asked for some written information on the externships and Howard provided it.

Howard also stated that he and Deborah have talked to Haverhill High School and Greater Lawrence Technical High School. Greater Lawrence is looking at solar energy and has a green solar room at the school. Howard talked about a new generation of solar panels and tubing that doesn't degrade as quickly as the ones currently used today.

Howard said if we get some of these high profile companies to participate others will follow.

#### **V. Common Measures Update(new WIA required outcomes)**

Deborah said that she and Lisa Coy attended the Common Measures training. It made it clear that we will be required to use both WIA regulations and Common Measures until FY2012. Commonwealth Corporation has inquired how we intend to train staff and the Youth Council on the Common Measures. Deborah will invite Sam Martin to come up and do a training session for both.

#### **VI. Update of Youth RFP and Timeline**

Deborah said that the RFP is getting close to release and we will be looking for one program with a relationship with a high school. Participating youth must be both WIA and YouthWorks eligible. To be so, they must have failed the MCAS English Language test. We are requiring that they must also have passed either or both the MCAS math or science tests. Meeting certain criteria in the program will determine their eligibility for a subsidized YouthWorks summer job. We are also exploring dual enrollment at NECC.

Megan Shea said that Dr. Hartleb spoke at the Rotary about dual enrollment. Ralph Abislaiman said that he has a meeting with Northern Essex today and will include the subject of dual enrollment. He doubted whether someone who has not passed the ELA MCAS test can dual enroll at college.

Cal Williams said that because of the RFP timeline we may need to push out the meeting in April to a later date. An e-mail will be sent to Youth Council members regarding the date. Bids will be solicited and reviewed. Megan asked if we will ask the Youth Council to review proposals and Deborah said yes, we will include that in the email.

#### **VII. Other Business**

Megan Shea said that the Lawrence Mayor's Task Force will hold a resource fair on YouthWorks on May 11<sup>th</sup> at the Lawrence Boys and Girls Club, probably from 6-9 pm.

April Lyskowsky mentioned that the Lawrence Youth Commission has held a Youth Recognition Day for the past twenty years for Lawrence in-school youth in grades 6-12 who have exhibited exceptional leadership. In the past, the event was held at Cedardale. This year they are

looking to do a day at Canobie Lake Park with the cost of \$32.25 per student. Additionally, funding is need for t-shirts and transportation. This is for 154 students. She said that she is seeking funding for this event.

Cal Williams said that he was in receipt of her request and would forward it to private businesses.

Rafael said in this political environment everything is scrutinized to the max. Recently our board chair's mother passed away. The Chair has volunteered countless hours to the board over many years and Ralph will have to pay for flowers out of his own pocket. So it will not be possible to help April with funding from the WIB, but we can give her suggestions of private organizations that might be helpful. Megan agreed that WIA Youth money has always been targeted for very specific activities and only those activities.

**VIII. Adjournment**

**Having no further business Megan Shea made a motion to adjourn seconded by Howard Allen. Motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Mary Kivell  
Recorder