



# YOUTH COUNCIL

## MINUTES

Wednesday, May 8, 2013  
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board  
439 South Union Street  
Lawrence, MA 01843

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

Howard Allen, Francisco Brea, Brad Howell, Steve Noroian, Michael Strem, Cal Williams, Ellen Weinhold, Megan Shea, Ed Warnshuis

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

Marina Acosta, Janet Allison, Irene Chalek, Tom Connors, Ed Fitzgerald, Barbara Richards, April Lyskowsky, Linda Piergeorge, Donna Rivera, Heidi Riccio, Beverly DeSalvo

### **MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:**

Rafael Abislaiman, Cristy Gomez, Mary Kivell

### **OTHERS:**

Denise Perrault, Tom Raiche

### **I. Call to Order and Introductions**

A quorum being present, Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:45 a.m. and introductions were made around the table.

After introductions Mike Strem questioned what the WIB was doing with STEM through Connecting Activities. Howard Allen replied that the WIB had an externship program through Connecting Activities which was very successful in the past. Teachers who participated incorporated what they had learned at worksites into their STEM-related curriculums. This allows students see to that what they are learning in math is useful at a local company. Howard said that there had been only a few externships and that the teachers involved may not have reached many students. We had more employers involved but then the economy declined and fewer participated. Lawrence is now focusing on MCAS preparation and fewer teachers are involved in outside initiatives. Now we want to go after and engage all twelve high school districts in our region to get commitments from some of them. He said that we expect to target six externships this year.

Mike Strem mentioned that his company is hosting a student from Northern Essex Community College who is interning for 180 hours at his company (Strem Chemical) in analytical chemistry while working towards an Associates Degree.

## **II. Approval of April 10, 2013 Minutes**

Cal then called for a motion to approve the minutes of the April 10, 2013 meeting.

**Motion by Megan Shea seconded by Mike Strem to approve the minutes of the April 10, 2013 Youth Council revised minutes as submitted. Motion passed.**

## **III. FY'14 Youth Funding**

Cal Williams then called on Rafael Abislaiman to report on FY'14 youth funding. Rafael said that the state funding is still up in the air. The House has reduced Connecting Activities and YouthWorks funding but it is up from their original \$2M budget and is now \$5m. The Senate may increase it more. He said that Connecting Activities will probably be level funded or only a little lower.

As Rafael previously mentioned Federal youth WIA funding suffered the smallest cut. There was a major, 22% reduction in WIA Dislocated Worker funding, WIA Adult funding was reduced 14%, and Youth funding was reduced by 10%. This will mean that we will have a \$1.5m budget for youth.

Rafael explained that WIA (Workforce Investment Act) replaced JTPA in 1998 and prior to that it was CETA. WIA is currently under review and may have a name change which has always meant less money.

Cal Williams said that the Youth Council is mandated under WIA and oversees programming and makes recommendations to the full board.

Rafael stated that the system is trying to deal with cuts. We lost an excellent employee in the youth department due to the shadow of possible bumping and lay-offs. It is sometimes a struggle to keep the right people employed. The vast majority of senior staff are excellent employees and should be here but in a few instances there should be a change and the issue is compounded by the fact that some senior employees are not bilingual and junior employees at risk of bumping are.

Francisco Brea mentioned early retirement or some other attractive offers might be useful but Chili said that we can't make an offer as it goes through the city. He said that he is working closely with the union and is discussing voluntary lay-offs or furloughs. He said that in all his years in this business he has never seen it as bad.

Rafael said that one senior person has left and their accrued vacation time was paid in a lump sum so they can begin to collect unemployment right away. Francisco said that he understands that these are hard decisions. Steve Noroian said that the Department of Mental Health is experiencing similar problems, and has also lost a lot of people. It almost seems like a generational problem when older people stay and young people are laid-off.

Chili then spoke about the changes with DCS and unemployment beginning July 1, 2013. The State will no longer be providing funds for one on one services for UI customers at career centers. This is a major concern as our clients have limited English and computer skills to navigate the new UI system. Every one of our staff will be trained on the new computer-based UI system which is only in English. Staff will strive to instruct customers on how to use it. We will not be able to provide any information on jobs. Chili continued stating that we will be setting up telephones and computers and all UI claims must be done either by phone or by computer. The instructions require a lot of reading and it took one of our computer savvy staff 35 minutes to get through the program. We are still getting 1,000 clients per month coming through this center and additional clients go through Haverhill. Francisco referenced a related injunction for equal services in Florida and said that people need training. He said that he would volunteer to help union workers learn how to use the new computer-based program.

Chili said that we are awaiting the information guides and marketing information and that UI needs to talk to legislators and Chief Elected Officials who will be getting the majority of complaints. Chili said that he will do the best he can to make the process work but our population may not be prepared.

Howard Allen asked if we still intend to reduce the footprint in Haverhill and Rafael said that decision is the Board and Mayor Lantigua and Mayor Fiorentini's to make. We are trying to save jobs and will only be getting 1/9<sup>th</sup> of our funding in the first quarter so we may have to leave Haverhill earlier than initially stated. He said that the greater portion of Haverhill clients would have fewer problems on line but he recognizes that services in Haverhill are important. Chili said that DCS is shutting down the system just when schools begin to close. Rafael said that with less and less money we need to prioritize what we should do. But it is very difficult to go from giving a lot to giving much less from one moment to another.

Cal Williams then said he wanted to congratulate Chili and ValleyWorks for their focus on customer service. Francisco then suggested being pro-active by going on the radio and advertising in the newspaper to get the word out regarding the changes in UI services at the Career Center.

#### **IV. Mass Clean Energy Workforce Capacity Building & Youth Pipeline Opportunities Proposal**

Rafael said that we submitted a proposal to the Mass Clean Energy Center for \$50,000 stating that we will include clean energy curriculum as part of our Connecting Activities Program. The program connects academics to the workplace. We will be introducing clean energy themes into the existing workplace familiarization system. This is a two year grant with 20% for internships and stipends with the rest supporting Connecting Activities staff. Denise Perrault asked if we coordinated with any colleges and Rafael said that in lean times when the money is short we are doing many things to collaborate with colleges. He cited a new manufacturing grant as an example. That grant includes the participation of four WIBs, three colleges and various technical schools. But almost all of the \$500,000 grant goes to training and very little funding

goes to case management and administration. We were promised admin funds from economic development but that money was given to UMass/Dartmouth. Rafael said that Massachusetts has 70,000 clean energy jobs with 35,000 of them in the northeast.

The plan is to provide green energy related information to students currently in area high schools so that this region can have more workers ready to work in that field. Because of the MCAS focus now found in most Massachusetts high schools, we will present green STEM information as workplace components in our after school and summer programs. We can also attempt to introduce green clean energy themes via our externship program. Participating teachers could learn how to use green themes as contextual subject matter in the MCAS prep curriculums.

## **V. Youth Program Updates**

Youth Program Manager Cristy Gomez presented the Youth Program Updates. She said that the Students Need a Plan (SNAP) program's primary goal is to assist students at-risk of dropping out of high school. Successful students graduate and upon graduation we have a positive outcome if they either pursue post-secondary education or certificate training or if they gain and keep employment.

During the past school year the program served 23 students and provided the following services: Academic and social support, Financial literacy workshop, Weekly (or more frequent) mentoring, Public speaking (VIP), Internship experiences (Access 21), Guest Speakers (Including, Massachusetts State Police and K-9 Units), Field trips to a local advanced manufacturing facility (AW Chesterton, Groveland, MA), College application help (Including a bi-lingual FAFSA information and application night), College visits (NECC, Bay State, and Ben Franklin Institute), and more. Twenty three (23) students enrolled, 21 are on track to graduate and 15 have been accepted to college. The lucky colleges include: Lesley University, Roger Williams, Johnson & Wales, Mass College of Pharmacy, Bay State College, Ben Franklin Institute, UTI, and our very own Northern Essex Community College. One student will continue with on-the-job training via Mass Rehab.

As the program is coming to an end, there will be a Student Recognition Night & Dinner on Tuesday, May 21, 2013 at the Haverhill High School Library to recognize each student for their accomplishments. There will also be Internship Final Presentations on Wednesday, May 22, 2013 at Haverhill High School Room A4 (VIP Meeting Room). If any Youth Council members would like to attend, Cristy said to let her know.

Cristy continued by stating that the NEW deadline for the Summer YouthWorks Employment Program is now Friday, May 24, 2013. She then took a moment to recognize Youth Council member Heidi Riccio from Greater Lawrence Technical High School for being named Educator of the by the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship. Cristy said that there was a nice article on this in the Tuesday, May 7, 2013 Eagle Tribune.

Cristy then informed Council members of a Future Ready Summit which is being held on Monday, May 20, 2013 at the DCU Center, Worcester, MA.

Megan Shea asked about WIA funded Out of School programs and Cristy said that we haven't had too many ITAs for OSY. In our region, OSY who have graduated or who have a GED are eligible to participate. Cristy also mentioned Career Construction Day. 85 area kids attended via us and another 80 attended via Northern Essex Community College so we exceeded our goal of 140 slots filled.

There was discussion on the new GED test. At this time, it is not clear what the test will include but it is reputed to be more difficult and demanding than the current test. Brad Howell asked a question on the Summer program and whether youth from other communities would become eligible if the minimum number of youth are not available in Lawrence, Haverhill and Methuen. Cristy said that we have a maximum number of slots that we fill and that recruitment at the three city high schools generates more applicants than there are slots.

#### **V. Partner's Information**

Cal then called on Youth Council members asking Francisco Brea if the AFL/CIO offers internships. Francisco Brea said that the AFL/CIO has a scholarship program as well as internships. They also have an apprenticeship program in Hopkington. Francisco said that he would look into these programs and find out their process.

Ed Warnhuis then passed out a flyer for Fundraise Scotland. They are having an event on Friday, May 17, 2013 – 6:45pm to help defray the cost of sending youth from the Lawrence Performing and Fine Arts High School to the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland this summer. They have won a contest and were invited to attend. Ed said that these students do a wonderful job and Rafael agreed.

#### **VI. Adjournment**

**Having no further business Howard Allen made a motion to adjourn seconded by Francisco Brea. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Mary Kivell

Recorder