



# **YOUTH COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES**

**Wednesday, May 12, 2010**

**11:30 a.m.**

**Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board**

**439 South Union Street**

**Lawrence, MA 01840**

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

Howard Allen, Kristine Blum, Brad Howell, Steve Noroian, Linda Piergeorge, Megan Shea, Cal Williams

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

Janet Allison, Tom Casey, Irene Chalek, Beverly DeSalvo, Lisa Coy, Ed Fitzgerald, Howard Flagler, Jason Pimentel, Barbara Richards, Heidi Riccio, Michael Strem, Vinnie Ouellette, Tricia Snow, Marianne Vesey, Ed Warnshuis

### **GUESTS PRESENT:**

Samuel Martin, Arthur Chilingirian, Ann Shaw

### **MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:**

Mary Kivell, Ralph Abislaiman, Deborah Andrews, Ruth Marrero, Odanis Hernandez

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

Youth Council Chairman Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:45a.m. Introductions were made around the table.

### **II. Approval of April 14, 2010 Minutes**

Cal then called for a motion on the minutes of the April 14, 2010 meeting.

**Motion by Steve Noroian seconded by Howard Allen to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2010 Youth Council meeting as submitted.  
Motion passed.**

### **III. Youth Council Member Profile**

Cal Williams then called on newly appointed Interim Executive Director Ralph Abislaiman. Mr. Abislaiman said that this is his second week in this job and he sees the work of the WIB as policy development, monitoring and enforcement.

He said that he worked at the International Institute of Lawrence and oversaw successful programs under JTPA. He said that they also had some programs funded under WIA, but had problems with the client flow. Ralph also said that the International Institute was also the host agency for emergency preparedness for fourteen cities covered by the WIB. During his time in the Navy, Ralph, as a junior officer, worked in engineering and education and as a senior officer in charge of education and as legal officer. He noted that on a small ship you are responsible for multiple tasks. Ralph continued stating that as a Commander and Captain in the Naval Reserve, he was called up after 9-11 to the Pentagon and managed 150 engineers. He was also called to active duty in 2005 and was responsible for new shore installations, including the Middle East.

Ralph said that his vision for the WIB is under development as he has many questions. Mayor Lantigua's interest is increasing Lawrencians on the board; increasing the vendor base; and increasing the number of minorities through the Career Center. Ralph said that Chili was good enough to give him the numbers from the Career Center. He said that 29% of clients are minorities and there is nothing negative in that number. He noted that walking down the hallway it is obvious the number of minorities waiting for services. He said that he is looking forward to working with the WIB and the Career Center.

Cal thanked Ralph for his remarks and said that he is looking forward to working with Ralph. He then asked Sam Martin to say a few words.

Sam said that Commonwealth Corporation is a quasi-public entity in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with Nancy Snyder as president. Commonwealth Corporation is divided into Youth Pathways, Applied Research and Development, and Sector Initiatives. Sam said that he works in the Youth Pathways in partnership with DCS for youth programs statewide offering trainings and technical assistance. The focus is to make sure that youth programs are aware of positive strategies and multiple avenues for education. We target resources for the most difficult to serve and told Youth Council members that they can call on him any time for one on one technical assistance.

Cal thanked Mr. Martin stating that he is a great partner.

#### **IV. Program Updates**

##### ***a. Summer Jobs – YouthWorks - ARRA***

Deborah Andrews said that we were going to receive approximately \$223,000 to serve 150 youth. We are targeting Lawrence, Haverhill and Methuen. Lawrence will receive 55%, Haverhill 35%, and Methuen 10%. There were over 300 applicants and about 150 will be chosen through a lottery set up to match youth with business interests. Businesses must sign up by May 31<sup>st</sup> and jobs are in the public, private sector and non profits. Deborah said that Governor Patrick has proposed using FY'11 funding and applying it to this summer in addition to the 2010 funding. The legislature will vote on this.

Chili said that if we are spending next year's money there may still be tough times next year. He said that with YouthWorks monies alone and without federal funding we are only able to serve 150 youth instead of the 800 last year.

Deborah said that each WIB is going to receive \$23,000 of left-over ARRA funds for summer jobs this year. This money can only be used for youth wages and would allow for 22 youth for 6 weeks or 19 for 7 weeks at 20 hours per week. Chili said that these funds could be used for older youth who can be up to 24 years old for private sector businesses that request older youth. Deborah said that the health and safety piece is big this year and Lisa Coy is getting the training.

Ann Shaw, ValleyWorks Youth Business Service Representative, said that she has 28 jobs in Lawrence for 18 year olds, 11 for 14-17 year olds and 18 with no preference. She said that businesses are still responding and the pool of 14-17 year olds is the largest to place.

Deborah then spoke about two proposals which are due on May 21<sup>st</sup>. Connecting Activities will let us continue to work with Lawrence High School, Haverhill High School, Lawrence High School Learning Center and we will be adding Methuen. We will have Job Shadow Day and Construction Career Day. We will provide intensive workshops on work readiness and the work based learning plan at the Lawrence High School Learning Center. These will prepare juniors for senior year internships which the students will have to earn. We are hoping to grow this program.

Deborah said that the other grant is a DESE MCAS related summer program. We will do this with Lawrence High School in the summer for 22 youth and pay them for an afternoon work experience. Megan Shea asked about using the model from last summer and Deborah said that she wanted it to be teacher driven and she is talking with the teachers. There is a short turn-around time for the grant.

Deborah then said that the state is looking to the federal government to adjust the WIA performance levels. There was a conference call with the state this week and Massachusetts is making recommendations to the federal government.

Cal Williams asked Sam Martin if the state WIB had put together a state Youth Council. Sam said that there is no formal Youth Council but there are several subgroups.

#### **IV. WIA Proposal Review Update**

Deborah said that we are contracting with LARE to fund the OSY Education and EMT Program and the OSY and Food Service proposals. The total funding of the two programs is just under \$200,000.

Deborah explained that the programs we reviewed for re-funding last month were reviewed at the Planning Committee meeting. While the Youth Council recommended not to fund the OSY Education and CNA and the OSY Education and Medical Assisting programs, the Planning Committee was unable to obtain a second for either funding or not funding and the subject was tabled. There was some discussion to re-fund the Medical Assisting program. Although the performance outcomes were only 40%, the medical assisting jobs were all well paying, training related jobs. She said that the Planning Committee will take up the matter at their next meeting.

Cal said that this committee felt that the amount of money and negative outcomes was not a good investment.

Megan Shea said that there were a lot of Medical Assistant trainings the past couple of years. Deborah said that of the 12 participants 5 received training related placements with a decent salary. Also, she said that the education outcomes were decent but we didn't want to put more graduates in the pool.

Howard Allen said that the contracts didn't meet delivery. We need to go back and revisit so we understand what is going on.

There was discussion on why the Youth Council voted if final approval of funding comes from the Planning Committee. Deborah said that the Youth Council always makes a recommendation regarding youth related funding. Betty Kirk said that the board gave the Planning Committee the power to make funding decisions as they full board only meets quarterly. The Planning Committee does pay attention to the Youth Council and almost always votes to accept their recommendation.

Megan Shea asked about obligating any additional funding and Deborah said that there is approximately \$67,000 and the WIB is in discussion with the state to carry over these funds. Ralph said that we are renegotiating with the state to move the money over to ITAs.

Deborah said that we received six proposals this round of RFPs and have two good programs coming up. We are working on building understanding of WIA requirements and on building more partnerships between education providers, training vendors, and employers in important industries throughout the Merrimack Valley.

Megan Shea said that she wanted to put the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center on the radar as they do medical assisting training and interpreting as well as pharmacy techs.

Chili opined that the federal government wants us to serve the hard to serve and that is not a problem for us. He said that it would be better if we stopped trying

to cram training into one year and served fewer people for a longer period of time. He would like to look at different models. Howard Allen talked about discussion at a meeting of another board he serves on regarding pressure from the state to set curricula up to meet the needs of the students. We are looking at identifying mechanisms to bring that along. Chili said that the technical schools are sending more graduates to college because of the occupational programs plus the concentration on academics. Kristine Blum said that there is difficulty at the technical schools with fitting all the strands together. Howard Allen agreed that there are not enough hours for students to learn and pass the certification for safety requirements.

Kristine said that her programs teach practical skills and she has no programs in Lawrence. She hears that staff at Lawrence PS have changed or there is not time due to teaching for MCAS.

Brad Howell said that he likes the two year model and suggested that the \$200,000 might be better spend enhancing what other groups try to do. There are other initiatives in the schools, Community Action, JobCorps, etc. He suggested sitting everyone down and try to plan how to enhance other initiatives. Speaking for himself, he said that he would need to put infrastructure in place to comply with reporting for programs. He said that he feels it would be more effective to enhance rather than recreate programs.

Deborah wondered how we could get information. Brad referenced a previous summit at Merrimack College to bring together youth and employment.

Ralph Abislaiman said that it is a wonderful idea. He said that sharing ideas on the evaluation and research category is the way it should be. Using the organization to study and coordinate scarce resources.

Kristine Blum said that her view is that the money is not getting to the kids early enough. She said that most kids have decided by 8<sup>th</sup> grade whether they will graduate and we are trying to fix 18-24 year olds. She said that we should try to work to keep them from getting there.

Ralph also said that sometimes at a conference, speakers use the forum to promote themselves or programs. He feels that there are better ways of raising issues. Sam Martin said that Commonwealth Corporation does network training for youth providers and Sam also mentioned that the North Shore WIB has a facebook account that connects with the local chamber, etc.

Discussion followed on entrepreneurships and opportunities after high school and Youth Council members being ambassadors to other agencies regarding what we do and what they are trying to do.

Ralph Abislaiman said that there are a series of possible paths for youth to delay becoming adults. Sam Martin said that today's jobs most in demand were not thought of five years ago. Kristine Blum suggested devoting fifteen minutes at each Youth Council meeting on a topic to share information. Cal said that we could go around the table and share views with a time limit.

Cal said that the next Youth Council Meeting is scheduled for June 9<sup>th</sup> and asked if anyone can host the meeting to contact Deborah. He also asked a member to let Deborah know if they can be the Youth Member Profile at the next meeting.

Howard Allen then reported that the externships went very well with one at Strem Chemical and one at Stanley Bostick. He said that they are getting together next week. He also noted that the colleges and schools take too long when bringing training to businesses. He said that businesses require a quicker turn around time.

**VII. Adjournment**

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

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Mary Kivell  
Recorder