



GREATER LOWELL WORKFORCE BOARD

Full Board Meeting

Thursday, 12/11/2025

1-2:30pm Nesmith House, Lowell, MA

Attendees: John Palmieri, Dawn Beati, Judy Burke, John Burrows, Allison Carter, Brian Chapman, Stephanie Cronin, Jon DaSilva, Melissa Desroches, Lisa Hall, Chris Hayes, Carl Howell, Luce Lopez, Nancy Ludwig, Danielle McFadden, Elizabeth McKiernan, Tom Raiche, Jean Tzchazou,

Kevin Coughlin, Austin Ball, Hunter Berube, Gabriela Boscaja, Cathy Byrnes, Jim Foley, Colleen Gabriel, Nancy Gagnon, Jaunita Green, Shaun McCarthy, Susan McQuaide, Kennes Mor, Shannon Norton, Gerry Nutter, Tim O'Connor, Somong Rattanayong, Diandra Silk, Cathy Sturtevant, Tyler Suon

- I. **Welcome, Call to Order** – John Palmieri called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM, confirming that a quorum was present. The minutes from the previous meeting held on September 18, 2025, were presented for approval. Stephanie Cronin motioned to approve, and Brian Chapman seconded – motion approved.

- II. **Special Guest Presentation** – John Palmieri announced that City Manager Tom Golden would not be able to attend due to a funeral and sent his regrets. He then introduced Somong Rattanayong, Director of Constituent Services from Congresswoman Lori Trahan’s office. Somong shared a few updates from Washington DC including:
 - a. There is a bipartisan push in Congress to expand digital training for workforce; WIOA is being updated to reflect this. A new bill has been filed “Digital Skills for Today’s Workforce Act” this would provide funding to state and local workforce boards to provide basic computer training and more advanced digital skills.
 - b. U.S Department of Labor issued new guidance allowing workforce boards greater flexibility to tailor training programs to local employer needs.
 - c. SBA launched the Manufacturers Access to Revolving Credit (MARC) program. This is the first SBA revolving credit option for small manufacturers, and the funds may be used for equipment upgrades, expansion, and hiring.
 - d. SBA waived most loan fees for small manufacturers in FY2026.

- I. **Report of Chair, John Palmieri**
 - A. **Invitation to Board Members to Join Committees** – John invited Board members to participate in three committees that were being established. The Performance and Opportunities Committee (chair, Kimberly Bodkin), the Fiscal, Budget and Grants Committee (Chair: John Palmieri), and the Youth Committee (Chair: Melissa Desroches). Board members interested in serving were asked to contact Susan McQuaide.
 - B. **Presentation of Ray Wrobel Award** – The Ray Wrobel Award is presented to a member of the MassHire community who embodies our four pillars of the MassHire mission: collaboration, respect, reliability and ingenuity. John presented this year’s award to Board member Tom Raiche.

- C. **Presentation of Gavel to Danielle McFadden** – John recognized Danielle McFadden and thanked her for her dedicated service as chair of the Board. In appreciation of her leadership John Palmieri presented Danielle with an engraved MassHire gavel.

II. **Report of the Executive Director, Kevin Coughlin.** Kevin noted that 2026 is expected to be a challenging year due to uncertainty and likely reductions in workforce funding. He then introduced initiatives the workforce board will be working on.

- A. **Health Care Institute** – Kevin noted that a major priority of the workforce board is expanding employment pathways in healthcare, the region's largest area of workforce demand. Efforts include developing non-clinical entry paths that can transition into clinical roles, allowing workers to advance their skills, avoid dead-end positions and increase earning.
- B. **Transportation Pilot (Phase II)** - Kevin announced that building on last year's program, which provided over 3,000 rides at \$2 each with no cost to MassHire, the board will explore a community employment transportation model across the service region. The partner company, QRide, has agreements with Uber and Lyft to support transportation for workers commuting to and from jobs. The program may involve grant co-sponsorships.
- C. **Skills and Training Partnerships:** Kevin said the Board will continue to strengthen workforce training partnerships with vocational schools, Middlesex Community College, UMass Lowell, private training providers, and organized labor. Efforts focus on aligning training with actual workforce needs and reducing unnecessary credential requirements, helping individuals move from unemployment or underemployment into jobs.

III. **Report of the One Stop Operator**

- **Fiscal Update, Austin Ball:** Melissa Desroches introduced Austin Ball, newly appointed fiscal agent for the Career Center and Workforce Board. Austin reported that he is pleased to be the fiscal agent for the Board and has been working to familiarize himself with the board's financial operations. He plans to provide regular fiscal updates at future board and committee meetings.
- **Career Center Update:** Shannon Norton reported that staff members had been recognized at the state's Workforce Award Ceremony held at the Hall of Flags at the State House and received two of the five awards. Receiving the Job Seeker Collaboration Award honored for their work at Lowell's emergency immigration shelter were Career Center staff Myrlande Emanue, Emmanuel Sena, Zaris Huerta, and Nicholas Campbell. Receiving the Modernization and Innovation Award was Jim Foley for his videos that demonstrate career center customers and staff success stories.
- **Resignation Announcement:** Shannon announced that she has submitted her resignation to the City Manager after accepting another position in government service. She reflected on her 22 years with MassHire, including 10 years as Executive Director, and thanked staff and partners for their dedication and accomplishments.
- **Business Services Update, Shaun McCarthy:** Shaun reported on recent job fairs held in partnership with Middlesex Community College, including the annual Veteran's Job Fair in November with 31 employers participating. Veterans received priority access and connections to veteran support services. Post-event surveys indicated approximately 65 potential employer callbacks. Planning is underway for the annual two-day STEM job fair with a goal of 50 employers. Shaun also noted efforts to maintain a diverse employer mix and observed slightly lower attendance among immigrant job seekers.

IV. **Adjournment**

John called for the adjournment of the meeting at 1:53 pm. Motion by Judy Burke, seconded by Jon DaSilva. Passed with unanimous approval.

V. **Next Full Board Meeting – March 12, 2026 (Hybrid)**

Minutes approved 3/12/2026