



# GREATER LOWELL WORKFORCE BOARD

## Full Board Meeting

Thursday, 3/13/2025

1-2:30pm (Hybrid)

**Attendees:** Danielle McFadden, Kimberly Bodkin, Judy Burke, Alison Carter, Brian Chapman, Stephanie Cronin, Melissa Desroches, Jonathan DaSilva, Lisa Hall, Carl Howell, Michelle LaGrega, Luce Lopez, Nancy Ludwig, Betty McKiernan, Tracey Meek, Tom Raiche, Jean Tchazou

Kevin Coughlin, Shannon Norton, Nancy Gagnon, Shaun McCarthy, Kennes Mor, Gabriella Boscaja, Cathy Byrnes, Cathy Sturtevant, Hunter Berube, Susan McQuaide, Jennifer Freeman

### I. Welcome, Call to Order (1:03pm)

Danielle called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM, confirming that a quorum was present. The minutes from the previous meeting held on December 13, 2024, were presented for approval. Stephanie Cronin motioned to approve, and Lisa Hall seconded – motion approved.

### II. Report of the Chair, Danielle McFadden

1. **Employer Recognition Event** – Danielle announced an event co-hosted by MassHire and the Chamber of Commerce titled *Cocktails by the Pool*, scheduled for June 4<sup>th</sup> at the Sonesta Select Hotel. Hunter Berube added that the partnership with the Chamber introduces more businesses to the Connecting Activities program benefiting the students served by the program. Kevin added that all businesses that have participated in the Connecting Activities program this year will be recognized.
2. **New Board Member Orientation – May 6, 2025** – Danielle invited all new board members and any current Board members that are looking to get a refresher to attend the upcoming orientation. Danielle encouraged members to attend and added that there will be a lunch catered by Dragonfly Café followed by a tour of the Career Center.

### III. Report of the Executive Director, Kevin Coughlin

1. **2025 DCS Monitoring** – Kevin reported that the Department of Career Services (DCS) has begun their annual monitoring of the Career Center and Workforce Board. The monitoring process encompasses all key areas, including fiscal oversight, budgetary management, and regulatory compliance, to ensure accountability and effective governance. He anticipates an initial report the first week of April and a final report that would be available for the Board in June.
2. **WIOA 4-year plan** – Kevin announced that work has begun on the new 4-year WIOA Strategic Plan. As part of this process, each local board is required to develop and submit a plan to the Governor, in collaboration with the chief elected official. The local plan will outline how MassHire partners and programs in our region align with the state's workforce development

strategy. Kevin also announced that two interns - one from UMass Lowell and one from Boston University - will assist with this effort. The plan will be available for the Board to review at the June Board meeting.

3. **CEDS Greater Lowell Economic Summit – March 20, 2025** – In Chris Hayes’ absence, Kevin announced the CEDS Greater Lowell Economic Summit will be held March 20, 2025. The summit will examine regional economic drivers, with input from consultants and focus groups to guide strategy and planning.
4. **Behavioral Health** – Kevin shared that a new employee has been hired to manage the Behavioral Health Grant and will begin Monday, March 17, 2025.

#### **IV. Special Board Presentations**

1. **Learn and Earn Program, Middlesex Community College** – Jennifer Freeman, Dean of the Office of Career Integrated Learning at Middlesex Community College (MCC), introduced the Learn and Earn Program. This initiative offers students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in their chosen careers while earning income and continuing their education. The program benefits employers by providing a reliable pipeline of qualified, entry-level talent. Initially successful in the Biotechnology field, the program has expanded to include Information Technology, Business, and Communications. Jennifer encouraged any interested board members to contact her for more information or to explore participation.
2. **City of Lowell, Year in Review** - Melissa Desroches introduced the Communications Team’s first major project: a “Year in Review” video. The video, presented to the Board, highlights notable projects and achievements from various departments across the City of Lowell.

#### **V. Connecting Activities, Cathy Sturtevant**

1. **Regional Convening (2025 DESE Grant Plan) May 2025** – Cathy Sturtevant announced that Connecting Activities would be hosting an in-person Regional Convening supported by the DESE grant at the Sonesta Hotel on May 14<sup>th</sup>. The event will bring together school administrators, superintendents, and the Connecting Activities Staff. The event will include student stories, experiences of school administrators and awards will be presented to business partners that have collaborated with Connecting Activities.
2. **CEO Round Table** – Danielle informed the Board about a CEO Round Table event at MCC that she has been organizing in collaboration with Colleen Gabriel and Lowell High School. The event will feature approximately 13 CEOs or senior-level executives, each seated at a table with high school students and a facilitator. The goal is to provide students with the opportunity to engage directly with business leaders, ask questions, and explore various career paths.

#### **VI. Report of the Career Center, Shannon Norton**

1. **Labor Market Information** - Shannon provided the Board with an update on labor market trends in the Greater Lowell area. She noted that unemployment is beginning to trend unfavorably, and job postings have been declining. However, salaries have increased. Long-term projections through 2032 indicate a decline in employment within the health and personal care sectors, which include professions such as pharmacists and opticians. Additionally, certain industries—such as information (including newspapers, media, and the postal service)—are also expected to experience continued decline.

2. **Shelter Work Update** - Shannon reported that the Career Center has worked with 341 individuals from the shelter population, successfully placing over 200 into employment - making it the highest placement rate in the state. They are currently enrolling students in ESOL and Advanced Manufacturing training programs. The team includes one full-time Career Advisor and two interns. The shelter is scheduled to close on December 31st.
3. **Business Services Update, Shaun McCarthy**
  - Shaun reported that Business services will be hosting a job fair with Middlesex Community College on March 25th and 26<sup>th</sup>. They are anticipating over 60 employers to attend. The event has continued to grow and last year over the 2 days 500 people attended.
  - new Business Service Representative will be starting in April and will replace the position left vacant in October with Rena Segool's retirement.
  - The Business Services Team has partnered with the Chamber and M3 to host a series of employer workshops. These informational sessions are designed to help employers learn about state resources available to upskill their current workforce or connect to talent pipelines. The next session is scheduled for March and will focus on state tax credits available for hiring individuals from targeted populations. A guest speaker from the Department of Career Services will also present on the temporary shelter-related tax credit.

## **VII. Adjournment**

Danielle called for the adjournment of the meeting. Motion by Lisa Hall, seconded by Alison Carter. Passed with unanimous approval. The meeting ended at 2:09 pm.

## **VIII. Next Full Board Meeting - June 26, 2025, 1-2:30 pm (hybrid)**

**Minutes Accepted 6/26/25**