



GREATER LOWELL WORKFORCE BOARD

107 Merrimack St
Lowell, MA 01852
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MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board
December 10, 2020
Zoom Meeting

Call to Order: 8:04 AM

Presiding Officer: Ray Wrobel, Chair

Attendees: Kim Bodkin, Judy Burke, Stephanie Cronin, Jonathan DaSilva, Jill Davis, Maureen Fitzpatrick, Beth Goguen, Charlene Jancsy, Maureen Kriff, Michelle LaGrega, Stephanie Lee, Nancy Ludwig, Cristine McCall, Danielle McFadden, John Palmieri, Cynthia Smith, Beverly Woods, Ray Wrobel. **Quorum present.**

Staff: Peter Farkas, Alexis Ciccanti, Katy Gentile, Jay Green, Cathy Sturtevant, Meelynn Wong, Shaun McCarthy, Shannon Norton

Guest Speakers: Dr. Joel Boyd, Latifah Phillips, Shaun McCarthy, LZ Nunn, Brian Norris, Robin Dion

I. Welcome

Chair Wrobel welcomed the group and new Board member Christine McCall, Director of Economic Development in the City of Lowell. He then introduced four guest speakers to talk about the "Portrait of a Graduate" and two guest speakers to talk about the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC).

II. Approval of September 17, 2020 Minutes

Chair Wrobel requested review of the September 17, 2020 minutes. With no comments or questions and a quorum present, Chair Wrobel requested a motion to accept the September 17, 2020 minutes. Motion made by Nancy Ludwig; seconded by Jonathan DaSilva. All in favor? Yes. Opposed? No. Vote: Unanimous.

III. Guest Speaker - "Portrait of a Graduate" - Dr. Joel Boyd, Superintendent of Lowell Public Schools

Dr. Joel Boyd, Superintendent of Lowell Public Schools, provided an update and overview of the "Portrait of a Graduate." He explained that it is a community wide collaboration to build out the goals for Lowell graduates in terms of college and career. It is the vision on what graduates should be able to do and to build the next generation of leaders. He reviewed the core beliefs, fundamental commitments, and the strategic priorities.

Latifah Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement Officer, at Lowell Public School explained educators, students, business leaders, family, and community members answered surveys and/or participated in focus groups. Through this process they synthesized the data and landed on the five core competencies the community wanted the students to learn: cultural competency, digital literacy, critical thinking, perseverance, and relationship building. Many students brought up how to deal with stress and help their peers was also important to them and they are still

looking into how to integrate mental health into the competencies. Other skills students suggested included taxes, cursive, financial, and others. Additional findings included students and families wanted positive relationships regarding to culture and ethnicity as a competency as well - understanding the different cultures and the assets it brings to the classroom.

Discussion occurred around what resonates and what was missing. The Board suggested active listening as another skill to focus on and emphasized that diversity was critical and an important part of the competencies. Dr. Boyd agreed and states students need to have access on how to build their career and that they do not only have to stay in entry-level jobs. We need to enable young people to see careers, understand it, and understand how it relates back to their education. They are looking into how to craft these types of internships and mentorships with businesses. For further comments and questions contact Latifah lphillips@lowell.k12.ma.us. LZ Nunn explained they are setting up virtual career speakers with Lowell schools and to please reach out with any career speakers.

IV. Overview of the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC) – Brian Norris

Brian Norris, Director of NAMC, presented and provided an overview of NAMC. The goal of NAMC is to develop manufacturing skills across diverse populations. Mr. Norris provided an overview of the NAMC partner and shared information on NAMC's two recent successful initiatives: the MA Apprenticeship Initiative and the Advanced Manufacturing Training Expansion Program. NAMC utilizes the MassHire values – collaboration, ingenuity, reliability, and respect, and has developed a sustainable, multi-partner pipeline to train candidates for advanced manufacturing careers. It is a regional effort working with four workforce boards. Mr. Norris reviewed sustainability and how funding had been solely through public grants but recently won their first private grant.

Robin Dion, Manufacturing Consortium Manager, presented and provided information on two projects. In one project NAMC is developing a uniform curriculum for precision machining – a curriculum guide that any school can use. In the Instructor Training project NAMC recruited veteran machinists, people looking to retire, or those that are looking to expand their career. The goal of the project is to have 10 instructors by December 2021. Overall, NAMC training programs have trained over 500 through the Summer of 2020 and 400 entered employment at an average wage of \$18.50. There have been 191 registered Apprentices in 14 occupations at 21 employers.

V. MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board Executive Director Report

Greater Lowell Updates

Mr. Farkas presented on unemployment data for Greater Lowell. There are about 10,000 people on UI in Greater Lowell. It peaked in June, but it is going down. Unemployment rate from February through October in Greater Lowell stayed relatively close but slightly lower than MA rates. Mr. Farkas then reviewed information concerning the labor force in Greater Lowell. The labor force includes those that are working or looking for work that are 16 years old or older. There are about 9,000 to 10,000 people that have dropped out of labor force as of October 2020 compared to the labor force during February 2020. Mr. Farkas then reviewed the profile and demographics of Greater Lowell UI Claimants as of October 2020.

Funding & State Budget

Mr. Farkas provided an update on funding and the State budget. Funding included a Workforce Competitive Trust Fund grant from Commonwealth Corporation for \$160,000 to train 20 unemployed jobseekers in electronics. A Retention Services Grant for \$120,000 from the Susan Schiro & Peter Manus Foundation, Boston Foundation, and Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. This project provides retention services for 2 years to low-income adults. The third project is based on the Re-Entry Grant from Commonwealth Corporation for \$147,980. This is a machine operator program for returning citizens from the Middlesex Jail and House of Corrections. Mr. Farkas then provided a chart with an overview of four additional new funding sources and a chart providing a FY'21 State Budget update. Overall, we will see an increase in funding for FY'21 for the MassHire Career Centers, YouthWorks/Summer Jobs, and Connecting Activities.

Upcoming meetings

- March 11th
- June 17th

VI. Adjourn

Chair Wrobel thanked everyone for attending. The Chair asked if there was any other business. Seeing none, the Chair requested a motion to adjourn. With no other business, motion made by Judy Burke; seconded by Charlene Jancsy. All in favor? Yes. Opposed? No. Unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 9:15 AM.