



GREATER LOWELL WORKFORCE BOARD

107 Merrimack St
Lowell, MA 01852
978.937.9816

MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board
June 24, 2021
Zoom Meeting 8:00-9:15 AM

Call to Order: 8:05 AM

Presiding Officer: Ray Wrobel, Chair

Attendees: Jonathan DaSilva, John Palmieri, Karen Frederick, Ray Wrobel, Cynthia Smith, Nancy Ludwig, Maureen Fitzpatrick, Kimberly Bodkin, Maureen Kriff, Stephanie Cronin, Jill Davis, Judy Burke, Elizabeth McKiernan, Beth Goguen, Tom Raiche

Quorum present.

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

I. Welcome & Introductions

Chair Wrobel welcomed the group and provided an overview of the agenda. He announced that the ribbon cutting event for the opening of the MassHire Lowell Young Adult Career Center would take place on June 24th at 11:30am at 115 Merrimack.

II. Approval of March 11, 2021 Minutes

Chair Wrobel requested review of the March 11, 2021, minutes. With no comments or questions and a quorum present, Chair Wrobel requested a motion to accept the March 11, 2021, minutes. Motion made by Stephanie Cronin; seconded by Karen Frederick. All in favor? Yes. Opposed? No. Vote: Unanimous.

III. One-Stop Career Center Operator Recommendation

Peter Farkas provided an overview of the Career Center Operator procurement process. Every four years under WIOA every local Workforce Board must competitively procure a Career Center Service Provider and/or Operator. We moved forward to procure only the Operator. \$9,000 in funds are available annually for services. The contract term is for two years with the Board's option to extend for additional two years. The role of Operator includes:

- Coordinating an integrated service delivery system for jobseekers and businesses
- Working in coordination with WIOA partners to increase operational effectiveness and efficiency
- Convening four WIOA partner meetings with Board's assistance

A RFP for a Career Center Operator was issued on May 10th, a Bidders Conference was set on May 17th, the proposal due date was June 14th, and the contract start date is July 1st.

Two proposals were received for consideration City of Lowell/MassHire Lowell Career Center and Community Builder Group. The Review Committee met on June 16th to review the two proposals.

Each were evaluated on 9 criteria with a max score of 100 points. The proposal recommended for funding best meet the requirements set forth in the FRP. The Review Committee unanimously voted to recommend the City of Lowell/MassHire Lowell Career Center as the Operator. Today we are requesting the full Board to vote to approve the One-Stop Career Center Operator Proposal Review Sub-Committee's recommendation.

Chair Wrobel requested motion to approve the Review Committee's recommendation to fund the City of Lowell via the MassHire Lowell Career Center as the region's one-stop career center operator for the period of two years from July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023 with a board option to renew for an additional two year. Motion made by Karen Frederick; seconded by Stephanie Cronin. All in favor? Yes. Opposed? No. Vote: Unanimous.

IV. Overview of Career Center's Business Services Department

Shaun McCarthy, Business Services Manager, provided an overview of Business Services. The Business Service team provides workforce solutions at no charge to employers including job postings, marketing jobs on the website, candidate screening and referrals, job description assistance, LMI and reports, business assessment, referral to funding incentives, and referral to Mass BizWorks programs.

The team does job fairs and recruitments both onsite and remote. The Premier Virtual platform is used, and they have hosted 3 job fairs so far through Premier. The Business Services team have served 414 businesses, provided 288 enhanced services, and listed 210 job orders.

The team includes Shaun McCarthy, and Business Service Representatives Marianne "Rena" Segool, Tim Hovey, and Thavrith Thao.

The team's approach is to be demand driven, supply driven, and process driven with clear messaging spotlighting the Biz Service Team, partnerships and collaborations, marketing jobs/occupations, and marketing greater Lowell's skilled labor pool. The team is also reliable showing up with consistent service delivery and continuous quality improvement.

V. MassHire Lowell Career Center Report – Shannon Norton

MassHire Award finalist and Young Adult Career Center Grand Opening

MassHire Awards Finalists are Janet O'Brien and Kathy Dupont in the "Respect" category. They did a great job during COVID and went up and beyond buying supplies and ensuring their customers had what they needed. The new Young Adult Career Center Services will be opening today. The Center has workshops, a computer lab, and a clothing closet for ages 14 -24.

Update on Reopening of Career Center to the Public

All staff State and Local are back in the building full-time. They are working on providing in-person services by appointment and will open for walk-ins September 6th. They are in process of hiring a security guard and there are all new computers for the resource room and UI. They are currently ready to be open for September 6th and earlier if needed, but that is the date currently set for reopening for walk-ins.

VI. MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board Report

Peter Farkas provided a workforce board update including the current picture for the FY'22 budget.

Greater Lowell's unemployment rate is currently at 6% not quite back to pre-COVID rates but the rates have continued to decrease. The rate is pretty consistent with the State of MA. The labor force as of May 2021 it is 159,939 almost the same as pre-COVID. The labor force is how many individuals 16 and above are looking or in work and there's a steady increase. Mr. Farkas provided an overview of continued unemployment claims by community with 1,583 in Lowell 52% of the claims. This does not count Pandemic Unemployment Claims.

Number of Job postings in Greater Lowell in the last 30 days there were about 3,800 job postings. Healthcare posting the most at about 628 postings followed by Manufacturing with 591 job postings representing over 40% of the postings.

FY'22 Budge Overview

In the last 6 years we've seen a decrease of funding but this year we will see an increase of \$275,274 for FY'21 – FY'22 for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Still below FY16 budget but this year we will be able to see more customers and provide more training.

The FY'22 State Budget overview was then provided. Currently overall funding from the State is looking good. Gov. Baker put out a plan, the American Rescue Plan, and there is a workforce development slice of the pie including \$240 million to fund a suite of job training programs and address skills gaps, to better position residents who want to be hired into jobs that businesses need filled. We believe we will see some of the federal money but the current allocations are not yet voted on in State Congress. We are currently awaiting guidance from the State for the FY'22 Annal plan and budget.

Chair Wrobel requested a Motion to allow the Executive Committee the authority to approve the FY'22 Annual Plan including the Budget. First Elizabeth McKiernan. Motion made by Elizabeth McKiernan; seconded by Judy Burke. All in favor? Yes. Opposed? No. Vote: Unanimous.

Chair Wrobel requested Motion to allow the Executive Committee the authority to approve the potential transfer of funds from Adult to Dislocated Worker. Motion made by Nancy Ludwig; seconded by Maureen Fitzpatrick. All in favor? Yes. Opposed? No. Vote: Unanimous.

An overview of occupational skills training and recruitments, review of the WIOA 4 Year Plan, and review of upcoming meetings and events was provided.

VII. 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 Elizabeth McKiernan; seconded by John Palmieri. All in favor? Yes. Opposed? No. Unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 9:18 AM.