



GREATER LOWELL WORKFORCE BOARD

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MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board
December 13, 2019
Tewksbury Country Club

Call to Order: 8:02 AM

Presiding Officer: Ray Wrobel, Chair

Attendees: Kimberly Bodkin, Robert Broughton, Judy Burke, Jonathan DaSilva, Jill Davis, Maureen Fitzpatrick, Charlene Jancsy, Nancy Ludwig, Danielle McFadden, Elizabeth McKiernan, John Palmieri, Cynthia Smith, Ed Starr. ***Quorum present.***

Staff: Peter Farkas, Lauren MacIsaac, Nancy McGovern, Beatriz Sierra, Shannon Norton, Kathleen Gentile, Cathy Sturtevant

I. Welcome

Chair Wrobel welcomed the group and introduced new board member Nancy Ludwig. At UMass Lowell, Ms. Ludwig is an Associate Dean of Graduate, Online & Professional Studies.

II. Announcements

Chair Wrobel announced that the 2019 Annual Report is in the member's packets. It is a review of the last fiscal year's activities for both the Workforce Board and the Career Center.

The Chair also announced the awarding of two new grants. Through the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC), received a \$625,000 grant from the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. The grant will train approximately 115 unemployed and underemployed people in welding, machining, and electronic assembly throughout Northeastern Massachusetts. In the Greater Lowell region, there will be a welding cohort at Shawsheen Valley Technical High School. The MassHire Lowell Career Center will assist in recruiting participants. Additionally, the Board was awarded a \$1,000 grant from the Walmart Foundation.

III. Regional Planning/Heat Maps

Mr. Farkas presented an update on Regional Planning and the development of HEAT maps to be used by the region. Mr. Farkas commented that the three Secretariats, Labor and Workforce Development, Education, and Economic Development are continuing their work on regional planning. The three boards in our regions, Greater Lowell, North Shore, and Merrimack Valley developed HEAT maps to be used by the region. The maps are centered around the three industries of Advanced Manufacturing, IT, and Healthcare, which are the priority industries for our region.

The maps indicate which areas of the region the jobs are concentrated in for each industry. The heat maps for Healthcare and Advanced Manufacturing are based off wage data. The map for IT is based on jobs posted data.

Mr. Farkas presented several slides and maps the first heat map: Advanced Manufacturing. The map indicates that there is a high density of jobs in Lowell and Lawrence. There is more manufacturing taking place in the region than people think. Ms. Fitzpatrick commented that the visuals are more effective, you can immediately see the snapshot of the industry. Mr. Farkas commented that transportation remains the big issue especially in the dark red area of 495. Transportation is the next issue to be tackled as part of regional planning.

The second heat map: Healthcare. The map indicates a more consolidated density based around the major hospitals, Lowell General, Lawrence General, and the smaller health centers in the urban area. Mr. DaSilva asked if the maps included pharmacy. Mr. Farkas stated that he didn't believe they were specifically targeted for pharmacy.

The third heat map: IT. This map is job posting based-the darker color indicates more job postings. The Greater Lowell area has the darkest in the region which makes sense with Kronos, Red Hat, and Lockheed Martin. Mr. Wrobel asked if there were enough employees to fill the open positions. Mr. Farkas stated that it was the issue that they were seeing.

Demographic slide: The chart indicates that the population age 24 and under are more concentrated in city/urban areas. At the Career Center level, the age breakdown is as follows: Under 21 10%, 22-45 43% and 46-54 21%. Ages 65 and older for the region is high. At ages 55 and older, 30% are utilizing the Career Center.

Education slide: The slide indicates that those with less than a HS diploma are concentrated more in the cities. Approximately 34% of the customers at the Career Center have less than a HS diploma; 46% have an associate degree or more and the balance have some college or a credential.

Economic slide: The largest concentration of those living below the poverty line is concentrated in large cities in the region. The Career Center does not capture this information at intake.

Mr. Farkas stated that the next steps in the process would be to discuss transportation. There is much discussion on jobseekers having transportation access to job opportunities. Ms. Fitzpatrick inquired about the transportation grant and if the shuttle is operational. Ms. Burke indicated that they needed more people to utilize the shuttle. Mr. Farkas gave an overview of the new restaurant shuttle that Middlesex 3 is running from Lowell to Burlington. Ms. Burke commented that there is a last mile challenge with the shuttle, getting to or from where the shuttle is located. Ms. Burke asked if there were a list of employers behind the maps that we can access. Mr. Farkas commented that there probably was because of the way the data was pulled and that he would investigate it.

IV. Workforce Board Report

Mr. Farkas provided the board with an update.

Unemployment Rates

Mr. Farkas stated that the rate continues to drop in the region from 2.9% to 2.1%. Between 10/18 and 10/19 the rate dropped from 2.9% to 2.5%. Ms. Fitzpatrick commented that at the hospital they are having a hard time finding entry level/support area candidates. Ms. Jancsy

echoed the sentiment. Mr. DaSilva commented that companies are rolling the dice on candidates who may not be qualified but appear to be good candidates and they are training them. We need to focus on skilling up. Ms. Bodkin commented that Raytheon is relocating people because the market isn't strong enough.

Mr. Farkas commented on the real UI slide. The U6 rate accounts for the discouraged worker, they don't think there is a job out there or qualified to obtain one. Mr. DaSilva asked if it included those with disabilities. Mr. Farkas stated he had to look into it.

Job postings-6,408 jobs were posted in the last 60 days. The industries with the majority of postings are the three priority industries. Raytheon, Kronos, Red Hat, and Lockheed Martin are large employers with the most openings. Ms. Fitzpatrick asked about the construction and trades. Mr. Farkas commented that those aren't necessarily listed in the postings.

WIOA

Mr. Farkas walked through the slide pertaining to the federal WIOA programs, funding, and performance. There is approximately \$1.3-\$1.4 million in funding from WIOA. There are 3 major programs that fall under WIOA-Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth. Mr. Farkas walked through the metric slides for the programs. For WIOA Adult, the Career Center exceeded all goals. He thanked the Career Center for their work on this program. We offer up to \$7,000 in funding for occupational skills training as well as intensive job search to get people back to work.

For the WIOA Dislocated Worker grant, the Career Center exceeded outcome goals. Mr. Farkas indicated that we can use the wage match system through the state to track data. The WIOA Youth program is a little different. The Board funds programs every 2 years through a competitive RFP process. This cycle, 4 programs were funded, 3 out-of-school and 1 in-school program with the board overseeing these programs. The median earning is a new metric that will be part of the quarterly reporting. For this past cycle, all set goals were exceeded.

Grants/Resource Development

Mr. Farkas provided an overview of the 2 other competitive grants:

- NAMC received a \$625,000 grant.
- We received \$15,000 for activities related to the Regional Planning process.

Other Updates/Events

Remodeling of the office space will begin in January. We will be saving \$1 million over 10 years by downsizing the footprint.

The youth networking mixer scheduled for January 14th from 4:30 to 5:30 pm was rescheduled due to weather. It is expected 35 youth, and approximately 30 employers will attend. Each youth will network with 5 different employers, for 3-5 minutes each, similar to speed dating.

The WIOA Youth RFP will come out in March for the next 2-year cycle.

In the spring we will be going through the Board certification process again. Monitoring of the Career Center will take place 1/13-1/27. Monitoring of the National Emergency Grant to address the Opioid Crisis will take place 2/3-2/7.

Future Meeting Dates

March 19th -location TBD

June 25th -location TBD

Mr. Wrobel asked if there were any questions or comments. Seeing none.

V. Review and Approval of September 19, 2019 Minutes.

Chair Wrobel requested review of the September 19, 2019 minutes. With no comments or questions and a quorum present, Chair Wrobel requested a motion to accept the September 19, 2019 minutes. Motion made by Charlene Jancsy; seconded by Danielle McFadden. All in favor? Yes. Opposed? No. Vote: Unanimous.

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 Elizabeth McKiernan; seconded by Ed Starr. All in favor? Yes. Opposed? No. Unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 8:59 AM.