



GREATER LOWELL WORKFORCE BOARD

MassHire Greater Lowell Full Board Meeting

9/14/23

MINUTES

MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board

Full Board Meeting

107 Merrimack Street

Lowell, MA 01852

September 14, 2023 – Minutes - Draft

Meeting Held in-person and via Zoom

Presiding Officer: Danielle McFadden

- Attendees: Kevin Coughlin, Shannon Norton, Jessica Bunting, Hunter Berube, Brian Sok, Shaun McCarthy, Cathy Sturtevant, Heather Donovan, Tom Raiche, Judy Burke, Danielle McFadden, Jill Davis, Nancy Ludwig, Ali Carter, John Palmieri.
- Call to order – Chair Danielle McFadden at 2:02pm
 - Motion to approve June’s Full Board Meeting minutes, Nancy Ludwig. Approved.
- In Memoriam: Former Chair Ray Wroble. Danielle and Judy spoke kindly about Ray, and Tom Raiche remembered an interaction and personal anecdote.
- New Board Members: Danielle introduced our 2 new Board Members who will be serving 3-year terms. Judy made a motion for the Board to approve both members, approved.
 - David Daly, PrideStar Trinity Emergency Transportation, Lowell
 - Toly Chea, Aqualite Corporation, Tyngsborough. Toly spoke about his background, grew up in Lowell came as a refugee from Cambodia. He started his company and now works charitably with Kevin and our Mayor in the community.
- In Gratitude for Board Service: Cynthia Smith, Element Care in Lowell. Danielle remarked that we are grateful for the work Cynthia did on our Board.
- Kevin expressed that he is grateful to all our labor partners, and we look forward to working together more in the future. Ed Starr, Tom Raiche, and Kevin Kelley. Quick labor facts were provided: 13.5million labor jobs were added to the economy under Biden-Harris administration. More than \$6B has been awarded in total grant funding.
- Report of the Performance and Opportunities Committee: Chair, Charlene Jancsy. Met recently and they have been briefed on everything the Board is working on. We will have an update at the next meeting.
- Brief Labor Market Data Information (2 slides). Brian Sok showed his first slide on Employment Statistics. Kevin remarked that MA is back to pre-covid levels. In 2007 MA had high unemployment and recovery was slow. This recovery was rapid. Now there are not enough people in the labor force, and we will take the opportunity to bring more people into the labor market and identify new training. Nancy Ludwig asked Brian to define “Labor Force”, Brian responded by saying it represents people looking for employment. Brian’s next slide highlighted Macroeconomic Data. He called for special attention to the Consumer Price Index dropping from last August. Also, a measure of inflation is a good way to track the economy for a region. The 30-year fixed mortgage rate has

been steadily increasing and puts pressure on the economy, employment, and cost of living. Kevin told the Board that we will continue to track these numbers to understand our employment picture. He asked if there is anything specific a Board Member would like us to track, let us know.

- **Transportation Pilot Program:** Kevin. Transportation is our #1 employment issue. The Workforce Board has been working to close the gap on this issue. We are initiating a Pilot Test through December with Himanshu Bhatnager of QRyde (\$2/ride each way – Home pickup to Workplace, Workplace pickup to Home). Kevin let the Board know that Himanshu is a Lowell resident, graduated from UMass Lowell. He has studied urban transportation challenges and considers himself an expert on “transportation technology”. The transportation providers will be funded, and the riders will pay \$2/ride. Kevin says this pilot project will be tweaked as it grows, and he will keep the Board abreast of its development.
- **Executive Director Report:** Kevin.
 - Funding for FY 24-25, cut in One Stop Monies in State budget of \$400,000. Throughout the budget process, Kevin told the Board that the Workforce Board and the Career Center both attempted to bring stability to the budget. Shannon told the Board she feels fortunate because we can tap into the miscellaneous fund as a cushion. They have an FTE that is paying for Shaun McCarthy, Jim Foley, Heather Donovan, etc. Judy Burke asked Shannon how much is in the fund? Shannon answered \$3million, which if the Career Center were to get shut down – it would pay for everyone for 1 year. Judy then asked about a supplemental budget. Kevin responded that we will reach out to Greater Lowell Legislators, and we can possibly combine with other state workforce boards to achieve the goal of multiple years with a workable budget #. There is still confusion as to why the number was dropped and told the Board we are working to sort through it as it is an important factor for the Career Center.
 - Connecting Activities: Cathy Sturtevant, Dept. of Education Allotment and New Staff Members. Cathy spoke about the budget being level funded at \$328,000. She also told the Board that the CA staff are in Lowell High School 2 days/week, and they are using “You Book Me”, an app where students can schedule time with our CA staff. To date, they have had 9 students sign up for appointments – great! Brian will be going to Billerica High School next week. Connecting Activities also reached out to middle schools for the first time to get students in the pipeline. It’s a good program, the younger students were enthusiastic. There are 2 new hires for Connecting Activities, they will start next Monday.
 - Grants: Hunter Berube. Hunter spoke about our current grants; they are as follows:
 - Re-entry grant \$200K (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024): training for positions in manufacturing and recovery coaching.
 - Behavioral Health Planning Grant \$107K (July 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023): Greater Lowell is the lead, working with North Shore and Merrimack Valley workforce boards.
 - Behavioral Health Training Grant Approx \$300,000/year - (January 2024 – 2027)
 - Healthcare Planning Grant \$107K (July 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023): North Shore workforce board is the lead.
 - Healthcare Training Grant Approx \$300,000 – (January 2024 – 2027).
 - QUEST Training Grant – \$1.3 M (Covid impact) (Waiting to hear)
 - Monitoring Requirements in January 2024 for the Career Center
 - Recertification of the Career Center FY24. An annual project involving the Performance & Opportunity Committee.
 - MassHire Dept. of Career Services (MDCS) Fiscal Monitoring. The annual project starts in January.
 - MHGLWB Programmatic Monitoring of the MHLCC. The annual project starts at the end of January.
 - MDCS Programmatic Monitoring of the MHGLWB. An annual project.
 - Regional Blueprint: Greater Lowell, North Shore, Merrimack Valley. This was last done in 2018. The state will make money available to work on this after the first of the year. Judy asked if this consisted of “many meetings”? Kevin answered yes, it will be a new blueprint for 2024. Nancy

Ludwig asked if the Regional Blueprint was thematic? Kevin responded yes, it is focused on manufacturing, healthcare, and IT for Lowell. Kevin let the Board know that we are hoping to engage a consultant to work with us on this. Chris Hayes asked what firms are working on the Regional Blueprint? Shannon said she did not remember, and she would get back to Chris with this information.

- Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Workforce Board. Kevin told the Board that the MDCS recommended separate SOPs from the Career Center. We are beginning to create SOPs for the workforce board, see our starting list below:
 - Meeting Procedures
 - Event Procedures
 - Job Fair Procedures
 - Dignitary Visit Procedures
 - Gathering LMI Data for Grants
 - Employee COMP Time
 - Employee Travel Reimbursement
- Career Center Report, Shannon Norton Calles: Shannon says the Career Center is very busy. People are coming back to work from Covid, and there is currently a 3-week waiting time to see a Career Advisor. They have 2 new people being hired but need more. There is a lot of foot traffic in and out of the Career Center.
 - FY22 vs. FY23 (June 30,2023)
 - New Customers to Career Center (+1,820)
 - Total Customers Served (+2,195)
 - Customer attending a Workshop/Webinar (+1,260)
 - Entered Employment (+1,168)
 - Entered Employment Average Wage \$32.92/hour (+\$5.20/hour)
 - Individuals with disabilities served (+119)
 - Total Unemployment claimants (+4,628)
 - Veterans Served (+31)
 - Increase in customer visits over this time last year (+16%)
 - Increase in Customer visits to the resource room over this time last year (+23%)
 - Increase in business Services to employers over this time last year (+28%)
 - Business Service Reps, Shuan McCarthy:
 - 2 upcoming Job Fairs
 - 10/4 Chelmsford, Age-Friendly 50+ job seekers. Great partnership with the town of Chelmsford, Lisa Maroni.
 - 11/16 at Lowell Senior Center, 20 Employers hoping to prioritize Lowell companies who hire veterans.
 - 11/7 GLTHS Job Fair, partnering with Connecting Activities

Shaun spoke about expanding their partnership with Middlesex Community College. Starting a new pilot where BSRs will be in the lobby 2x/month to create awareness of BSR team and what they do. They continue to do onsite recruitment, and Shaun asked everyone to share the upcoming job fairs with their networks. Tom Raiche wants to include the Labor Unions at the above Job Fairs, and Danielle McFadden will add the job fairs to the Chamber's newsletter.

- Summer Youth Works Program, Heather Donovan: Heather told us her Summer Work Experience Program paid out \$560,000 toward wages to young people, thus filtering it back into the community.
 - Paid \$568,137 in wages and stipends to 266 summer youth (79 more youth and \$51K more than last year)
 - 13 participants enrolled in a Digital Office skill certification
 - 18 participants took OSHA10 certifications

- 58 participants took CPR/First Aid training.
 - Added Lash Tech and Driver's Ed to course offerings
 - Two service-learning projects were completed (1 on homelessness in the City of Lowell and 1 on Animal Shelters specifically benefiting the Lowell Humane Society). 40 young people participated
 - 65 worksites throughout the city
- Next Meeting dates:
 - Full Board Holiday Meeting: December 7, 2023 (in-person) at Nesmith House
 - Future dates for Danielle's approval:
 - Thursday, 3/14 2-3:30pm
 - Thursday, 6/13 2-3:30pm
 - Thursday, 9/19 2-3:30pm
 - Thursday, 12/12 2-3:30pm
- Adjournment at 3:30pm.