

## Full Board Meeting

6/14/23

### MINUTES

- I. Call to Order: Danielle McFadden
- II. Introductions: Attendants were in-person and virtual.
- III. New Business
  - a. Performance & Opportunity Committee: Charlene Jancsy  
Charlene spoke about the recent concern of the Career Center and their outcome goals. She explained to the Board that the Performance Committee came together to discuss the Career Center Young Adult Manager's outcome data as it had been historically low. Charlene explained that the Committee was made aware of the client category in question, and that it is a challenging group with many barriers. She let the Board know there was formal verbal counseling and a plan created. This plan was brought to Shannon Norton who drafted a response and action plan which she shared with Judy Bower, Career Center Field Monitor. Charlene was confident in the process and that it would yield a positive outcome. Kevin Coughlin added that we were very thorough. He explained that he and Shannon looked at the Action Plan together and viewed it as an opportunity to engage new partners and identify new technology to improve data collection and help get outcome numbers where we want them to be.
  - b. 2024 will be a Career Center Recertification year. The Executive Committee will review the recertification requirements and follow up at the next meeting in September. Kevin expects preparation for this to be good, and we will be ready with a plan.
  - c. We are excited to welcome Secretary Lauren E. Jones of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development for a tour/visit. Secretary Jones' knowledge of the Workforce Board has been terrific. We are hoping to share good news regarding upcoming grants and give her a tour of the Career Center. Kevin feels Jones is extremely transparent in her governing, and we appreciate that.
- IV. Report of Executive Director: Kevin Coughlin
  - a. The Full Board and the Executive Board asked for more economic data as part of future meetings. We will deliver and be the "go to" resource for this. Kevin and Jessica recently attended a Workforce Board Summit and grabbed a few slides to show today. Our charts showed unemployment rates, population changes, and job growth among foreign-born, below poverty, median age, and with college degrees citizens. The 2<sup>nd</sup> slide showed the cost of living in MA, it is apparent that jobseekers are migrating out of MA.
  - b. Standard Operating Procedures. Judy Bower recommended the Workforce Board develops a separate SOP from the Career Center. The Workforce Board agrees, and we will make sure to include the PII Policy as well as 5 identifiable activities: Fiscal Monitoring, Program Monitoring, Field Monitoring, WIOA 4-year Plan, and Career Center Recertification. We will keep the Board privy to this process.
  - c. WIOA 4-Year Action Plan. Kevin reviewed this plan and saw it was over 600 pages, however our local part is about 45 pages. We are mandated to review mid-term to modify if necessary. We followed proper procedures, posted publicly, Executive Board reviewed it, and it was submitted and filed properly. We have determined "No Modifications" currently.
  - d. Connecting Activities, Cathy Sturtevant. Cathy introduced a new employee Colleen Gabriel, she is the new Youth Advisor. She is an alum of GLTHS and Middlesex CC. She will be working at Lowell High School and GLTHS assisting students. Cathy also discussed new VR software initiatives to offer training to HS students, and we hope to loop in our Union Reps. We have started looking at 2 software platforms, Interplay and Transfr. DESE has done a pilot program at North Shore, Brockton and New Bedford Workforce Boards have sampled Transfr. They will review with us at the end of June in Marlboro. We would lease 20 packages for Greater Lowell, and we can lend them out. Cathy let the Board know that we have a great relationship with Lowell High School (Mike Fiato, Head of School). We have come up

with an Action Plan to work with LHS that includes company tours, focus groups, and a career speaker series. We want MassHire to meet with students during their first 2 weeks of school, and to speak with juniors and seniors about career pathways and trainings. We want to target students graduating without a plan. In addition, we have included in our action plan with Lowell High School to target our career exploration to younger students, i.e. freshman.

- e. Grant Updates, Hunter Berube. Hunter spoke about the Re-Entry Workforce Development Demonstration Program Grant for \$200,000. The training and work placement will target “re-entry citizens”, or formerly incarcerated citizens over the age of 25. The two jobs we are focusing on that are considered a high priority are Re-entry Coaching and Manufacturing. Hunter concluded by letting the Board know that our collaboration with the Career Center was a huge success in this endeavor. The next grant Hunter highlighted is the Connecting Activities Grant which will be filed on 6/23. The amount of funds is \$328,474. Hunter updated the Board about DESE’s new grant portal (GEMs) which is a system streamlined to apply for grants. The software allows everyone to be level-funded and will ask 5 questions. It should be a lot easier when applying for grants and funding. Kevin can now sign for new grant applications rather than the City Manager – save time and effort and keep the process in-house.

Finally, Kevin updated the Board that we are in the planning stages of the Behavioral Health Grant. The budget and application summary have been submitted, and the planning period is from 7/1/23 through 12/30/23. The new grant period is from 1/1/24 through 12/30/27 (3 years). This process has come together very quickly. Starting from when CommCorp asked us to continue the grant, then we put together a budget, then a procedure plan and application summary has been a 2-week turnaround. Kevin also told the Board about new energy initiatives he learned about at a recent meeting with MA Workforce Boards held in New Bedford. Currently there is a wind/energy program that can hire our job seekers without a college degree. They will be able to get training and can make up to \$100,000/year. There is a green economy being developed in New Bedford, and they need a workforce to bring the job seekers. Kevin also mentioned future Federal and State funding opportunities. One is the CHIPS Act which is an Advanced Manufacturing and MA Tech collaborative. The other is an initiative to improve data skills for job seekers in MA.

Kevin and staff will soon be attending a MA Tech Collaborative in Marlboro where the following will be discussed: Cyber Center, EHealth, MA Broadband, and the Innovation Institute. There they will be addressing the digital divide. The CHIPS Act is a federal act creating chips that go into everything. This will mean money coming back into our area. We want to strengthen our STEM training, and Congress is also donating over \$200 million to bring STEM back with all types of training.

Digital Skills in MA. We are constantly trying to assess from our members what are the digital skills needed for the next 5 years. MA is going to compile a 5-year plan and will make sure good services are compensated.

- V. Career Center Reports, Shannon Norton. Shannon told the Board that a new IT Manager position will start on Tuesday. Mike Durkin is retiring. Also, the cyber hack on the city of Lowell allowed us to realize how outdated our technology is. Our server and Wi-Fi both need updates – so he will be very busy.

Youthworks got a large increase in funding putting 14–20-year-olds to work this summer at sites across the city of Lowell. These youth will also receive soft skills training. In addition, the Van Crew will be all over Lowell and will start working on 6/29. Regarding focusing on company tours for Lowell High School students (and other students), Shannon wanted us to know that the Van can bring students on these company tours.

Shannon offered an update on the Bus. The GLTHS has done a wonderful job. In addition to GLTHS students, our YouthWorks students are also helping to work on the Bus. It has been a collaborative effort. The Bus will be ready in September.

- VI. Business Service Rep, Shaun McCarthy. Shaun gave the Board an update about his 2 job fairs this spring. There was one on Earth Day that focused on clean energy jobs. He partnered with HUD and had 15 employers and over 80 job seekers. He felt the job fair was a success. He also put on a 2-day job fair at Middlesex Community College. This is an annual job fair with 56 employers and about 250 job seekers over 2 days.

There will be a new job fair in Chelmsford, and it will be age-friendly. This means it will target job seekers over 50 years old. Shaun is also always continuing on-site recruitment at the Career Center, and his latest focus will be the Lowell Post Office here at the Career Center on 7/25, and he is hoping for a good turnout.

Danielle McFadden reminded Shaun that she can post job fairs in the Chamber newsletter and their social media channels.

Kevin asked Shaun about extending the reach of the Career Center, and Shaun said they are trying to get out into the community more, building better relationships with Middlesex students and being more visible to the community at large.

- VII. Success Story, Jim Foley. All attendants watched a Success Story video produced by Jim Foley. The video boasted that ALL Career Advisors in the Career Center are certified in resume writing.
- VIII. Next Board Meeting will be 9/14 2-3:30pm
- IX. Adjournment.