



GREATER LOWELL WORKFORCE BOARD

Full Board Meeting

Thursday, 9/19/24

1-2:30pm (Hybrid)

Attendees: Danielle McFadden, Melissa Desroches, Lisa Hall, Rasy An, Betty McKiernan, Kevin Kelley, Tracey Meek, Beth Goguen, John Palmieri, Jill Davis, Tom Raiche, Chris Hayes, Vichtcha Kong, Judy Burke, Nancy Ludwig, Carl Howell, Stephanie Cronin, Kimberly Bodkin, Christopher Dick, Jean Tchazou, Brian Chapman, Melissa Desroches

Kevin Coughlin, Shannon Norton, Nancy Gagnon, Brian Sok, Heather Donovan, Shaun McCarthy, Kennes Mor, Gabriella Boscaja, Colleen Gabriel, Juanita Green, Brynn Geary

I. Welcome, Call to Order (1:01pm)

Danielle began the meeting, at which a quorum was present, by approving the prior minutes from June 13, 2024, with an amendment to add John Palmieri as being in attendance. Tracey Meek motioned to approve, and Kevin Kelley seconded – motion approved.

II. Report of the Chair (Danielle McFadden)

1. New Board Member Orientation - Danielle informed the Board of the New Board Member Orientation on Tuesday October 22nd that will include a catered lunch from the Dragonfly Cafe. Kevin Coughlin added that the orientation will include a tour of the Career Center led by Shannon Norton.
2. New Board Member - Danielle welcomed new Board member Lisa Hall, VP, Senior Human Resources Business, Enterprise Bank. Lisa said she is excited and looks forward to hearing more about the board and how she can contribute.

III. Report of the Executive Director

1. Pilot Project #1 - \$2 Ryde - Kevin informed the board that Phase I was completed in June and during that time there were 4,148 confirmed rides. One factor that skewed this number were rides provided to newcomers at the former hotel for rides outside of employment such as interviews and physician appointments. Kevin thanked the City Manager and Melissa for their help and announced that Phase II will hopefully be able to start in January by identifying new funding sources.
2. Regional Blueprint – Kevin discussed The Regional Blueprint and noted that there has been a change of the leading priority industries with Manufacturing leading and Health care and Social Assistance following but still being a high priority in this region. The Regional Blueprint involves three workforce boards; Greater Lowell, Lawrence and Salem, MA with collaboration from the UMass Donahue Institute. Kevin added that the Regional Blueprint will be very important because future funding will be dependent on the findings contained in this blueprint.
3. Mandatory Partners – Kevin explained the Mandatory Partners Agreement and that it provides wrap around services to clients at the Career Center, he has been working with Sean McCarthy on this project. Sean informed the Board that the agreement has recently been updated through

2027. The goal of the agreement is to keep services aligned to receive WIOA funding and provide core services to shared customers. Sean reported that the mandatory partners meet quarterly and there will be an annual report forthcoming.

IV. Grant Management Updates

1. Re-entry Grant - funded through Commonwealth Corporation with the Workforce Board, Career Center and Thrive as partners. Sean mentioned that it has been a very challenging program and was a learning experience for working with this specific community. There were 24 participants and nine ended up with jobs. Kevin explained that Thrive is a partner that works with individuals that have been incarcerated and are re-entering the workforce.
2. Behavioral Health – Brian Sok reported that we are in year one of the grant and working on year 2 modifications. He provided an update on healthcare enrollments which included 12 participants in EMT, phlebotomy and dental assistance. Behavioral Health included a mix of 22 participants in therapeutic monitoring, addiction counselor programs and recovery coaching. Kevin added that year 2 begins in January 2025 and we are adjusting our goals for training and placement with the assistance of Nancy Gagnon from the Career Center.

V. Connecting Activities

1. STEM Program - Colleen Gabriel reported that the STEM Program which started in early spring was closed out August 31st. She reported they exceeded their goal and secured over 50 placements into a variety of STEM related field for students.
2. The Middle School Employability Skills Series – Colleen announced that the Middle School Employability Skill Series was launched at the Butler Middle School. The series will be taking place every Wednesday and will work specifically with eighth graders.
3. Colleen introduced new intern – Brynn Geary who will be working with Connecting Activities.
4. Upcoming activities will include a job fair at Greater Lowell Technical High School on November 5th, field trips and speaker events. Jill Davis asked if she could connect Kilos Computer with the Connecting Activities staff as they have reached out looking for skilled workers. Colleen will connect with Jill by e-mail or in person when she is in the school.
5. Farming and Agricultural Capstone Project - Juanita Green spoke about the success of the Farming and Agricultural capstone project that created a work-based learning experience for students centered on environmental sciences. Students completed water testing soil testing, predator monitoring and environmental research. Because of the success of the program there are more communities looking to get involved.
6. Mock Small Business Loan Capstone Project - Juanita announced that they will be launching their first mock small business loan capstone project. The capstone project involves partnerships with local banking branches and provides a unique opportunity for students to learn about the finance and business career field. Connecting Activities is working with Enterprise Bank and has been receiving interest from Workers Credit Union and other local banks and credit unions.

VI. Report of the Career Center, Shannon Norton

1. City Communications Team - Melissa Desroches provided an overview of the City Communications Team which will be headed by Diandra Silk. The newly formed team of five people will work together to increase collaboration between departments and make a more

efficient process of the way that communications run through the city. Their primary goal will be to promote the One Building, One Message theme.

2. Shannon shared a comparison of FY23 vs FY24 which shows about a 10% increase in total customers served. She also reported that first quarter numbers are showing a bigger increase over last year's numbers. Shannon was asked how this compares to COVID numbers and she answered that these number are getting back to pre-COVID levels. Shannon also reported that they have also had an increase in New Employers of close to 14% with the increase of Total Employers reaching 7%. Total Veterans served has increased by 7%.
3. Shelter Work Update - Shannon reported the Career Center is working in the Shelter at the former ICC and they have worked with 262 individuals and placed 162 in employment in over 50 different companies. The Career Center attended a graduation ceremony held in July at Middlesex Community College for HHA training participants. Judy Burke praise Nancy Gagnon for the work she has done at the shelter and for supporting MCC's training program. Shannon reported that funding for this work which was slated to end in September has been extended by the state based on certain data.
4. Business Services Update - Sean informed the Board of hiring events which included an Age Friendly Job Fair in Chelmsford 10/2/24; Veterans Job Fair November 2024; Migrant Shelter Hiring Event at the Blaire House 9/24/2024. He also announced staff changes in the Career Center: Will Ren will be transitioning to a new role in Business Services and Marianne 'Rena' Segool will be retiring in October.

VII. New Business

1. The One Stop Career Center RFP – this process initiates in October. Career Center Staff interrupted to ask if Shannon or Beth Goguen could provide an explanation of Operator versus the Service Provider for the Board. Beth Goguen explained there are two options and asked if the board is planning to procure for the Operator, as it is now, or Operator/Service Provider. Judy Burke spoke of history MCC had with losing an RFP for an Operator with another Workforce Board and noted that it was very detrimental and it interrupted the flow of the region. She also praised the great job the Career Center is doing. Beth Goguen explained that it does not matter the route that is taken (Service Provider or Operator) and that both require an open procurement process. Kevin explained that WIOA requires this process be followed every four years.
2. Motion to send RFP procurement process to Executive Board by Rasy An. Second by John Palmieri – Motion approved.
3. Workforce Summit – Nancy Gagnon informed the Board of a Workforce Summit that will be taking place at Fort Devens on September 26th. The Career Center and Kevin Coughlin will be attending.

VIII. Adjournment

Danielle called for the adjournment of the meeting. Motion by Stephanie Cronin, seconded by Rasy An. Passed with unanimous approval. The meeting ended at 2:13 pm.

IX. Next Full Board Meeting

Full Board Holiday Meeting – Thurs, Dec 5, 1-2:30 pm (in person at the Nesmith House)