



# GREATER LOWELL WORKFORCE BOARD

MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board

Full Board Meeting

12/7/23, 2-3:30pm

Nesmith House, Lowell

MINUTES

Attendees: Danielle McFadden, Charlene Jancsy, Elizabeth McKiernan, Jill Davis, Judy Burke, Kevin Kelley, Luce Lopez, John Palmieri, Beth Goguen, Stephanie Cronin, Chris Hayes, Gabriela Boscaja, Shaun McCarthy, and Heather Donovan

Workforce Board: Kevin Coughlin, Cathy Sturtevant, Hunter Berube, Jessica Bunting, Brian Sok, Colleen Gabriel, Nita Green, Kennes Mor, and Andrew McCusker.

## I. Approval of Full Board Meeting MINUTES 9/14/23

Danielle called the meeting to order. She made a motion to approve the prior minutes of the 9/14/23 Full Board Meeting. Motion approved, unanimously. **Jessica will post the prior minutes to the website.**

## II. A Look Back 2023, A Look Forward 2024

### a. Pilot Programs

- i. Transportation: Kevin Coughlin spoke about our Transportation Pilot and collaboration with QRyde. We are moving forward and to date have completed 192 rides, approximately 15 rides/day, and QRyde has employed a full-time call center person. Transportation continues to be the #1 barrier to employment. We are continuing to seek funds to eliminate the cost factor through funds granted through Clean Energy, DOT Department of Transportation, and DEI Diversity Equity and Inclusion as these are all programs our transportation pilot will support. Our riders will continue to pay \$2/ride, and we came up with this amount so riders would value the service.

Kevin and our partners at QRyde recently kicked off this program with the City Manager at City Hall. Going forward, we will identify focus groups and continue to capture the data through the summer and all of next year. Kevin also presented to Stephanie Cronin's M3 members with Judy Burke. Stephanie has agreed to facilitate the program with all of her M3 members, and Judy Burke is looking to grow this service to/from her Bedford campus. Kevin let the Board Members know that we are looking to include the Fort Devens area and use ARPA funds to do this.

Our hope is that HR hiring managers within companies will use our transportation program as an add on service when hiring new employees. Stephanie Cronin asked if our transportation program would accommodate Lowell residents looking to commute to the VA? Kevin responded that the requirement is that the ride has to be the same time every day. Kevin added that we are trying to remove variables at this time and keep it streamlined. Stephanie also

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asked if we will increase our transportation program services over the summer when the intern population is inflated. Kevin responded that we will be able to adapt and accommodate for this.

Chris Hayes asked how we are reaching unemployed individuals to let them know about the service. Kevin responded that we are putting together a marketing strategy, and we will use our connections and resources to spread the word.

ii. Workforce Development Academy

The goal of the WDA is to incentivize UMass Lowell and Middlesex Community College students to train and prepare for full-time employment with the City of Lowell. We plan to design our goals to not only employ our youth but also to make them valuable and self-reliant members of the City of Lowell's workforce.

This initiative plans to create a pathway for talent into Lowell's public service infrastructure through a public service academy pipeline. We are working closely with the City Manager to identify the key areas that need training. We want to start by preparing our city workplaces so students can view, tour and understand each industry. Further, we will offer tuition reimbursement to students entering a City of Lowell internship. Upon graduation, we will guarantee them a job, and in return they will work for the City for 2 years.

We've hired a retired UMass Lowell business professor to be our consultant on this initiative, Ralph Jordan. Kevin will have more to report to the Board at our next meeting.

Chris Hayes asked if graduates could work in other surrounding towns/areas outside of Lowell in town positions? Kevin responded positively and that NMCOG would be the perfect vehicle to make that happen.

### **III. Grants, Hunter Berube**

Hunter spoke about our current grant situation. We are working on the Re-Entry Grant, \$200,000. Heather Donovan spoke about receiving the \$2M Youthworks grant. She said her program will be able to filter \$1M by way of wages to young people in their first jobs. She is also working on a variety of training programs. For example, they have built in Drivers Ed as well as Lash Tech for the first time.

Jessica spoke about the Workforce Boards' work on the Healthcare / Behavioral Health HUB Grant. Greater Lowell is the lead on the Behavioral Health side of this grant (\$2.6M), and the planning grant began about 6 months ago. The Workforce Board team has been working with Behavioral Health Employers in the Greater Lowell area to identify their open positions within the behavioral health field and how this grant can help fill those roles. Some of those employers include Vinfen, The Bridge Club, Lowell House, Lowell General, Trinity Care Associates, IINE, just to name a few.

The Workforce Board also identified local Training Providers to confirm training and certificate programs which will strengthen the pathway for these positions and ultimately the behavioral health industry going forward. The Training Providers we are working with include Middlesex Community College, The Bridge Club, Trinity Care Associates, and more.

The behavioral health industry is different from healthcare because it focuses on the emotions and behaviors that affect one's overall well-being. It is sometimes referred to as mental health and often includes substance abuse. Our Workforce Board team (Jessica, Brian, and Hunter) has learned so much about this industry and has come to recognize it is rapidly growing in Lowell, in Massachusetts and across the country. The Workforce Board in collaboration with the MassHire Career Center are hoping to add real value in their efforts in tackling this important workforce need. The Workforce Board team submitted their grant proposal to CommCorp this week after a huge endeavor on everyone's part.

Jessica said the Behavioral Health / Healthcare HUB grant is a combined effort between three workforce boards – Greater Lowell, North Shore, and Merrimack Valley. MassHire's North Shore Workforce Board is the lead on the Healthcare side of this grant (\$2.4M). The Greater Lowell team will work with Healthcare partners in our area to make sure North Shore's WB team is accurately filling the jobs in need. Our team will also collaborate with the training providers in our area to train and certify job seekers to prepare them for the healthcare field. We have the mindset we will be successful in this combined Behavioral Health / Healthcare grant, and we will keep the Board posted going forward.

#### **IV. WIOA Youth and Connecting Activities**

Cathy Sturtevant currently has 4 full-time employees who work for her in all the high schools in the area. These staff members go to Lowell High School 2x/week. They brought guest speakers into Billerica High School, and they conducted a successful job fair at Greater Lawrence Technical High School. They have another job fair planned for March, then the annual job fair at Lowell High School in April.

Monitoring: Cathy is working diligently on the Workforce Board's monitoring schedule. She completed monitoring IINE and GLTHS this week. Cathy will begin monitoring our Career Center, and after that Judy Bower, DCS will monitor Cathy.

#### **V. Career Center**

Kevin introduced Gabriela Boscaja, Shaun McCarthy and Heather Donovan - our Career Center Management team. Kevin let the Board know that there is a great working relationship between the Workforce Board and the Career Center.

Heather Donovan went on to let the Board know that she is working with a new grant through the Department of Youth Services, and she will be bringing on a new staff person. She also told the Board that her department has a new van to provide transportation to worksite locations for students. This past summer she had a successful group of students working with the Cemetery Department. In addition a mobile van was purchased, and Heather and her team are working to pull together all the details and be able to use it this summer. The Career Center will use this mobile van in all areas, bringing their Career Center services to the youth in the community.

Shaun McCarthy, told the Board that he had a very busy fall with 2 job fairs: 1) Chelmsford "Age-Friendly" Job Fair, over 100 attendees and 2) Lowell "Veteran-Friendly" Job Fair, over 100 attendees. Shaun explained to the Board that his team always follows up with a quick brief survey, which they upload into a spreadsheet. Between the 2 job fairs, the BSR team had 57 employers indicate they would do additional interviews with candidates met at the job fairs. There were 207 interviews scheduled with these employers after the job fair events. Vinfen has projected

hiring 20 people from these job fairs, and has already begun interviewing. Shaun further explained that it can take as much as 100 days to track a candidate from referral to hire. This can be a difficult task because the state will NOT share employee data. This means the BSR team needs to sustain great relationships with not only the employers but also the newly hired employees. The BSR Team has a presence at Middlesex Community College once a week in-person in their lobby. They target near grads who are looking for work and experience. This presence has been successful for both the BSR team and Middlesex Community College. Judy Burke added that MCC is grateful for the BSR's presence. Specifically, she commented that Tharith from the BSR team has been a positive influence on near grads as he is an MCC alum and an excellent MassHire representative. Judy let Shaun know that Hanscom AFB is eager to hire early childhood educated students. Judy would like to continue this conversation with Shaun going forward. Shaun concluded that the job fairs are an overall great ROI on new hires.

#### **VI. Greater Lowell MassHire Career Center**

Gabriela Boscaja spoke about the Career Center meeting their goals of FY23, and are ahead of the game. Kudos to the Career Center. Gabriela told the Board about meeting with other Career Center fiscal officers to increase our overall budget in the future. She told the Board they will work together to come up with a plan and will follow up with the Board. Kevin added that our original budget had consistent funding. ARPA money will eventually come, and we already have enough in reserve to cover us for the foreseeable future. Kevin will soon come to the Board for a vote to increase the budget. Kevin concluded that the Workforce Board and the Career Center collaborate daily, and we depend on Gabriela and the Career Center greatly. There is a great synergy between these two departments.

#### **VII. New Board Member, Brian Chapman**

Kevin wanted the Board to know that we have added a new Board Member, Brian Chapman. Brian is the Chief Executive Officer of Mill City Environmental. From Federal, State, and Municipal institutions to Commercial, Residential, and Railroad clients - Mill City Environmental offers effective and efficient cleanup solutions involving transportation and disposal, remediation and restoration, and abatement and decontamination services. As we build our private sector, we are excited to welcome Brian and Mill City Environmental to our esteemed Board.

#### **VIII. Staff Recognition**

In recognition of our valued Board Member, Ray Wrobel, the Greater Lowell Workforce Board would like to introduce the Ray Wrobel Award. Kevin wants to present this award to someone who has worked hard, is personal and professional at her job, with many years of industry knowledge – Cathy Sturtevant! Cathy, we thank you for all you do.

Kevin wanted to take this time to recognize all his Workforce Board staff. He told the Board about the hard work coming from Connecting Activities. He introduced our intern, Andrew McCusker who was so lovely to play background piano music for this event.

Kevin also thanked all the Board Members. He/We are grateful to have all of you and look forward to working with you in 2024 and for many years to come.

#### **IX. Adjournment**

Danielle made a motion to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded by Judy Burke and Jill Davis. The Holiday Full Board Meeting adjourned at 3:19pm.

