



GREATER LOWELL WORKFORCE BOARD

Full Board Meeting

Thursday, 12/5/24

1-2:30pm Nesmith House, Lowell, MA

Attendees: Danielle McFadden, Judy Burke, Alison Carter, Stephanie Cronin, Jill Davis, Lisa Hall, Chris Hayes, Luce Lopez, Betty McKiernan, Tracey Meek, John Palmieri, Jill Davis, Jean Tchazou,

Kevin Coughlin, Shannon Norton, Hunter Berube, Cathy Burns, Heather Donovan, Colleen Gabriel, Nancy Gagnon, Shaun McCarthy, Susan McQuaide, Kennes Mor, Gerry Nutter, Cathy Sturtevant,

I. Welcome, Call to Order (1:11pm)

Danielle began the meeting, at which a quorum was present, then moved to approve the prior minutes from the September 19, 2024 meeting. Stephanie Cronin motioned to approve, and Judy Burke seconded – motion approved.

II. Report of the Chair (Danielle McFadden)

1. **Board member changes** - Danielle welcomed Carl Howell, CEO of Community Teamwork to the Board and thanked outgoing member Rasy An for his service.
2. **Competitive Selection for Career Center Operator**
 - Vote - reaffirm the vote of the Executive Committee to conduct a competitive selection process for Career Center Operator (Only).
 - Motion by Stephanie Cronin, seconded by Tracey Meek – motion approved
 - Update on RFP process calendar – Kevin updated the board on the RFP process. The RFP must go through procurement at city offices and is scheduled for publication on December 9th. If all goes as planned, proposals should be received by the March board meeting. If the proposals are not received by then, there is ample time to meet the June 30th deadline.
3. **New Board Member Orientation Report** - New Board Member Orientation was held on Tuesday October 22nd and included a catered lunch from the Dragonfly Café and a tour of the Career Center led by Shannon Norton. Carl Howell, Lisa Hall and Jean Tzchou were in attendance with Danielle McFadden, Kevin Coughlin and members of the Workforce Board. Chris Hayes asked if all Board members have gone through orientation. Danielle explained that this is a new program and Kevin added that the plan is to offer the orientation twice a year. He also offered to visit or meet by Zoom with new members unable to attend an orientation to go over the basics of board expectations.

III. Report of the Executive Director

1. **Ribbon Cutting for the Mobile Career Center** – The Mobile Career Center was put into service during an official ribbon cutting ceremony with the City Manager. The bus also had its first official showing during Lowell's City of Lights parade. The bus provides an opportunity to

bring services out of the building and into neighborhoods and underserved areas. The board continues to work on strategy to have a presence with the bus at events. Kevin thanked Jill Davis for the support from Greater Lowell Technical High School instructors and students and all their good work on the bus.

2. Updates

1. **WIOA Reauthorization by Congress, Washington, DC** – The Workforce Board has been monitoring if the WIOA reauthorization will be done this year. At this time it looks like the election is tumultuous and will most likely have to wait until after the new year. Some changes in the authorization may include the One-Stop Operator being moved from a 4-year to a 5 or 6-year contract. Kevin said the most asked question being received by Executive Directors is what is expected from the new administration. Kevin believes there will be new priorities coming from the new administration in January but there is no reason to believe that these will be detrimental to the workforce efforts. At this time the feeling is we should not expect any destabilization of the workforce piece and priorities surrounding strong employment and training will be necessary. Kevin has been in communication with the offices of Lori Trahan and Senator Markey and will keep the board updated of any changes.
2. **Strategic Plan 2025** – the 4-year strategic plan is coming to an end on June 30, 2025 and will need to be renewed. This process will include all board members and Nancy Ludwig has been contacted to help us with finding a graduate student to assist with this project. There will be two pieces: First piece will be strategy and thoughtful conversation about employment and trends in the future. Second, will be implementation which will include the Career Center and data they can provide. We will be using the Regional Blueprint for guidance and expect our identified key industries; healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and financial services, to remain as strong priorities for our area. We plan to have focus groups and discussions regarding how to enhance our strategic plan. The Strategic Plan will provide guidance to the board for the next 4 years.
3. **2025 DCS Monitoring** – Annual monitoring by the Department of Career Services (DCS) occurs every year, this year it will take place March 10-21, 2025. The areas monitored include fiscal, career center, youth and workforce board management. We are prepared and have already had conversations with our monitor and do not expect any issues to arise.

IV. **Connecting Activities Year in Review** – Cathy Sturtevant introduced Gerry Nutter, new Connecting Activities staff and provided an overview of FY2024. Connecting Activities is now serving 9 school districts, 2,646 students served through events and workshops, 391 students attained part-time employment, began new paid STEM internship, and started outreach to Middle Schools with morning workshops. Kennes Mor added that CA hosted 10 weeks of work skills in the Middle Schools that included how to write a resume, interview skills, time management and the job search process. Working with students at an earlier age helps them grow within high school. Kennes is now presenting this program at the Collegiate working with 9th graders. Cathy announced that Gerry has reached out and is working with Dracut High School to provide Career awareness and workshops. Nita has been working with Chelmsford High School and hosted a career exploration breakfast with 41 professional and also an Innovations Speaker Pathways series. Colleen held a job fair at GLTHS with over 500 students and 36 employers. This event received a lot of great feedback from employers and students. Connecting Activities is collaborating with the Chamber to host a CEO Roundtable event for Lowell High School in March and a STEM speaker event in February. Colleen thanked Danielle for her help in providing speakers for events. Cathy added that CPR and OSHA training was offered at Lowell High School and will be offered again this coming year.

V. Report of the Career Center, Shannon Norton

1. Shelter Update – Shannon informed the board that they continue working in the shelter downtown and have enrolled 290 people into the program and 189 have received employment, this is the highest in the state. She thanked Nancy, Cathy and Shaun for their hard work. 37 people trained in the summer through Middlesex for Home Health Aides which was a huge success. The Career Center has hired 2 people bi-lingual in Haitian Creole, one working for Cathy on the state side and one working for the Career Center. The Career Center is going after additional grants to provide English Language Learning through Abisi Adult Ed and ELL with advance manufacturing.
2. Ohana Paterson recently earned her Professional Resume Writer Certification, becoming the 10th employee at the Career Center with this designation.
3. The Career Center has instituted a Veterans Newsletter which has been in the works for a while with Veterans Rep Dan Boland. This newsletter is specific to veterans.
4. Shannon congratulated Heather on a \$30,000 planning grant with the Clean Energy Center. Heather explained that the grant is to create career awareness and green jobs for young people and also create a bicycle technician training program with the Bike Connector located downtown Lowell. The grant is through CommCorp and the next step will be to apply for an implementation grant.
5. Shannon thanked Judy Burke for hosting the career center at a very successful job fair at Middlesex Community College. Shaun McCarthy added that in November they had a Veteran's and Community Job Fair and staff that specializes in social media provided free linked-in photos for veterans and also partnered with Hidden Battles Foundation, a local non-profit that provides mental health services for veterans. The job fair had 10 veterans, 32 employers, and served over 200 job seekers. Shaun added that over the past year in person events have brought in a lot more people. He added that word is getting out and attendance is up, they are hoping this turns into more hires and opportunities for people to get out and meet employers. Judy Burke thanked the Career Center for their work in hosting on campus job fairs and complimented them for running a first-class operation and paying attention to every detail. Next job fair at MCC will be in March in an attempt to capture new graduates.
6. Shannon announced that the Young Adult Career Center has moved to a new space in the Wannalancit Building. This move provides have more space for programming and staff. Shannon said they will probably having an open house after the holidays. Heather noted that they are now the largest indoor career center in the state.
7. Results from FY2024 have come back and the Career Center has met or exceeded all goals

VI. New Business

1. Chris Hayes, NMCOG, the designated economic development entity for the economic development administration in Washington DC. They are currently in the process of developing a 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy which will guide all funding from this agency and coordinates economic development work. Most board members have received an invitation to talk to the consultants working on this project. If you are interested, you can get Chris's contact information from Kevin. There will be a summit in the spring and Chris will let the workforce board know it is scheduled.

VII. Adjournment

Danielle called for the adjournment of the meeting. Motion by Stephanie Cronin, seconded by Judy Burke. Passed with unanimous approval. The meeting ended at 1:48 pm.

VIII. Next Full Board Meeting

Full Board Meeting - March 13, 2025, 1-2:30 pm (hybrid)