



GREATER LOWELL WORKFORCE BOARD

Full Board Meeting Thursday, 06/26/2025 1-2:30pm (Hybrid)

Attendees: John Palmieri, Dawn Beati, Kimberly Bodkin, Judy Burke, John Burrows, Allison Carter, Jon DaSilva, Melissa Desroches, Lisa Hall, Chris Hayes, Carl Howell, Luce Lopez, Elizabeth McKiernan, Tracey Meek, Tom Raiche, Jean Tzchazou

Kevin Coughlin, Shannon Norton, Hunter Berube, Judy Bower, Cathy Byrnes, Heather Donovan, Shaun McCarthy, Susan McQuaide, Cathy Sturtevant, Tyler Suon, Weslee Var

I. Welcome, Call to Order (pm)

John Palmieri called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM, confirming that a quorum was present. The minutes from the previous meeting held on March 13, 2025, were presented for approval. John Burrows motioned to approve, and Allison Carter seconded – motion approved.

II. Report of the Chair, John Palmieri

1. Confirm Slate of Officers for Term July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

The Nominating Committee presented the following slate of officers:

Chair: John Palmieri

Vice Chair: Kimberly Bodkin

Second Vice Chair: Tom Raiche

No additional nominations were made.

VOTE: Motion to approve by Judy Burke, seconded by Alison Carter. Passed with unanimous approval.

2. **RFP One Stop Operator** Kevin gave an overview of the RFP process which followed an issuance from the state. The RFP included public notice and bidders conference with final proposals due May 20, 2025. A Review Committee was formed and has recommended to award the One-Stop Operator role to the City of Lowell/MassHire Lowell Career Center.

VOTE: Motion to award the One Stop Operator role to the City of Lowell/MassHire Lowell Career Center by Judy Burke, seconded by John Burrows. Passed with unanimous approval.

3. **WIOA Contracts** – Increase of 25% recommended to support expanded services and ensure current partners can meet increased demand and performance goals. This adjustment aligns with available funding and identified program needs

VOTE: Motion to approve a 25% increase to the existing WIOA contracts. Motion by Judy Burke, seconded by Jonathan D'Silva. Passed unanimously.

III. Special Board Presentation

2025-2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) - Chris Hayes, Housing and Economic Development Program Manager at the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), provided an overview of NMCOG's role as the regional planning agency for the Greater Lowell area and its liaison responsibilities with the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). Chris highlighted the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), a five-year planning document currently open for public comment through September 30. The strategy aims to align regional economic development efforts and support funding opportunities through the EDA. Workforce Board members were encouraged to review the plan and submit priority projects via surveymonkey.com/r/ceds-priorities or visit www.nmcog.org/strongertogether for more information.

IV. Report of the Executive Director, Kevin Coughlin

1. **WIOA 4-Year Plan** - Kevin reported that the WIOA 4-year plan has been completed and has been posted for public comment, the public comment period will go through July 11th. The plan reflects a post-COVID workforce landscape, with updated data and trends related to hiring, education pathways, and high-demand occupations. Kevin thanked the Workforce Board staff and interns for their support in completing the draft.
2. **Secretary Lauren Jones Announcement** - Secretary Lauren Jones visited the region and announced a \$1 million grant in support of the YouthWorks Program. The grant, authored through the Career Center, will fund summer and year-round employment opportunities for youth. This investment will significantly enhance the program's capacity to serve young people across the region.
3. **Massachusetts State Workforce Board Meeting** - The State Workforce Board recently held a meeting in Lowell, hosted at the Hall of Flags in the Auditorium. The event brought together many key workforce stakeholders from across the Commonwealth. Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll co-chaired the meeting as a special guest, adding visibility and significance to the regional workforce efforts. Following the meeting, attendees toured the Bridge Club, a regional partner launching a new culinary training program.
4. **Hall of Flags Pamphlet** – Weslee Var, a returning intern and rising junior at Boston University studying marketing, was invited to speak about a historical pamphlet he developed for the Hall of Flags at the Lowell Memorial Auditorium. Weslee shared that he was born and raised in Lowell, and felt honored to research and design the brochure, which has now been officially adopted by the City of Lowell.

V. Connecting Activities, Cathy Sturtevant

1. **Regional Convening** - Cathy Sturtevant shared that the Connecting Activities Staff held a Regional Convening on May 14, at the Sonesta Hotel in Lowell. The goal of the convening was to strengthen relationships between the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, school administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, and employers. The Connecting Activities staff produced and shared a video including partner testimonials that showcased the work being done throughout the year.

- a. **Business Recognition Event with Chamber of Commerce** – The Connecting Activities staff partnered with the Chamber of Commerce for a ‘Cocktails by the Pool’ event at the Sonesta Hotel in Lowell. At the event businesses were recognized for their support of the Connecting Activities program.

II. Report of the Career Center, Shannon Norton

- **Shelter Work Update** - Shannon reported that the Lowell shelter site will close at the end of the month. Many former residents have connected with the Center via walk-ins and job fairs, with continued efforts to support their transition into the community. Concerns were raised about immigration challenges, especially the upcoming expiration of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian nationals in August. Significant staff time is dedicated to this work including a full-time DCS-funded position.
- **Young Adult Career Center** – Heather Donovan shared that the Young Adult Career Center, in partnership with Greater Lowell Technical High School, held a graduation ceremony earlier in the day. Twenty young adults earned certifications in CNA, Home Health Aide, Alzheimer’s care, and feeding assistance. The event was well attended by families, instructors, and staff.
- **Business Services Update**, Shaun McCarthy shared that two job fairs were held this spring - one at Middlesex Community College and a new event at the Chelmsford Forum. Combined, they drew over 100 employers and 800+ job seekers. At least 10 hires have been confirmed, with more pending follow-up. The Chelmsford event marked the first multi-partner effort with local chambers, workforce boards, and municipalities, and included a successful pre-event employer networking session. Positive feedback was received, and plans are underway to make it an annual event, possibly earlier in the year due to venue conditions.

VI. Announcements:

- a. John welcomed Dawn Beati, Manager of Field Operations for DCS and John Burrows, Business Representative North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters to their first official Board meeting.
- b. Tom Raiche announced an upcoming event at the Hall of Flags, scheduled for tomorrow at 10:00 AM. The event will celebrate the opening of a new veterans’ house located near the Bridge Club. Catering will be provided by recent graduates of the catering program. All were invited to attend.
- c. Full Board Meeting Calendar Reminder:
 - September 18, 2025, 1-2:30 (hybrid)
 - December 11, 2025 (Nesmith House – in person)
 - March 19, 2026, 1-2:30 (hybrid)
 - June 25, 2026, 1-2:30 (hybrid)
 - September 17, 2026, 1-2:30 (hybrid)
 - December 10, 2026, (Nesmith House – in person)

VII. Adjournment

John called for the adjournment of the meeting. Motion by Tom Raiche, seconded by Nancy Ludwig. Passed with unanimous approval.

VIII. Next Full Board Meeting – September 18, 2025 1-2:30 pm (hybrid)