



Planning/ Career Center Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 18, 2017

8:00 a.m.

255 Essex Street, 4th Floor

Lawrence, MA 01840

Members Present:

Juan Yepez, Chairman
Rosalin Acosta, Ron Contrado, Andrew Herlihy, Bob Wescott,

Members Absent:

Mike Munday, Abel Vargas

Staff Present:

Rafael Abislaiman, Corina Ruiz

I. Approval of Minutes of the March 14, 2017 meeting

A quorum being present, Juan Yepez, called the meeting to order at 8:06 a.m. and then called for a motion on the minutes of the March 14, 2017 meeting.

Motion by Bob Wescott, seconded by Rosalin Acosta, to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2017 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

II. Performance Summary as of March 31, 2017

Rafael asked if there were any questions. Bob Wescott asked if the new dislocated worker participants are all Polartec customers and Rafael said most of it. Out of the 246 new dislocated worker participants, 179 are Polartec. Rafael added that this has been a productive year although the enter employments are still low. The WIOA youth served was a surprise because we are normally under enrolled. Rafael said that the LARE Out-of-School Youth program in electronic assembly was only able to recruit five of the ten they planned. It's hard to find kids and part of the reason may be the number of youth who go to college. About 20% of the students graduating from a community college take about six years to complete their associate's degree.

III. Budget Update as of March 31, 2017

Rafael said we are on track and still have some things on accrual. Most of the \$255,511 is set-aside for different manufacturing programs. The ITA accrual is for customers already in training but whose training hasn't been billed by training vendors. The vendor service fees are largely building related. Juan asked if we bumped up the budget for telephone and communication. Rafael explained that we had explored the possibility of getting a new phone system but decided to reinstall the existing system when we moved. Juan noted the elevator is not working. He asked who is responsible for

fixing it and Rafael said the landlord. Rafael added that he received a letter from the State asking for a plan to resolve issues related to ADA parking and the elevator. Juan said he would be surprised if the cost to replace it is more than \$400,000. Rafael said that Embree is contracted by the City of Lawrence to maintain the elevator. They have serviced the elevator but it keeps breaking down. Rosalin asked if there are any employee issues related to the elevator not working and Rafael said yes. There are a couple of employees who cannot easily go up and down the stairs and they are looking for ways to accommodate them. The same applies to customers.

IV. Grants Update

Rafael apologized for Susan not being present due to a cold. He said she wrote and the MVWIB just received a \$25,000 WCTF planning grant from Commonwealth Corporation to design training for Latino ex-offenders for Laborer jobs. There were eighteen proposals submitted and the MVWIB was one of the two chosen. Four of the proposals submitted were from Lawrence, MA. Rafael continued by saying that the grant will ultimately be for \$250,000. We plan to work with the Sheriff's Department and with the probation office to help people who are on probation find employment.

It is Rafael's belief that the WIOA money is best spent on poor people who just need a little bit of help. The idea of exclusively focusing on people that are very poor and victims of many barriers is a waste of money because you keep churning the same people in and out of the system. There are many poor and low income people that will climb with a little bit of help. Those poor and low income people can enter and stay in the job market. When you have specialized grants that are created especially for people that are in trouble in one way or another, it makes sense to apply and try to get them. But know that Sheriff Cousins earlier told us that the recidivism rate amongst men at the Farm is about 70%.

V. Career Center Report

Rafael said things are settling down. ValleyWorks staff had the misconception that a new career center operator meant they were going to lose their jobs. On April 12th, NECC President, Lane Glen and George Moriarty met with the staff and assured them that come July 1st, everyone becomes NECC staff and none will be laid-off. The only position that does not transfer over is the current VWCC Executive Director who is encouraged to apply for the NECC OSCC Director position.

Rafael said that Amy Weatherbee exercised her right to obtain FOIA documents. He provided her OSCC review documents but redacted individual comments. Rosalin said the process was a good and that she would like to see the documents Amy had requested. Rafael added that a notable negative for employees is that some people's health insurance contribution is going up from 20% to 25%. Some people are already contributing 25%.

VI. WIOA Update

Rafael said that Massachusetts is giving new emphasis to regionalization. Apart from offering more crossing-region labor market information, most WIB directors also think it's an effort to reduce the number of WIBs from 16 to 7. That will take years to happen. The law states very clearly that unless the CEO and Board agree with that transition it can only occur for underperformance. But the State continues to set up a process where consolidation is possible. Under the current formulation, we are with North Shore and Greater Lowell. Surprisingly, Metro North, Metro West and Boston are together. Greater Worcester and North Central are also together but Cape Cod stays alone. The numbers are very lopsided.

Massachusetts is going to get a 10% allocation reduction and our region will probably get more than 10% reduction.

Andrew Herlihy said that Massachusetts population is going up and western Mass is going down. Rosalin asked what happens to South Shore and Rafael said the South Shore becomes part of a region that includes Fall River and New Bedford. Rosalin also asked if this is done to reduce cost and be more efficient and Rafael said yes. Rafael said the number of career centers will roughly remain the same. Most WIBs rely mostly on WIOA funds and don't raise money like we do and don't apply for other funds.

Ron asked if we can take advantage of NECC grant writing capabilities when they step in. Rafael said we have to create a demarcation clarifying when the MVWIB or the college pursues grants. Rosalin added that pursuing grants has to be coordinated. Juan asked if this would be a problem with the State and Rafael said it could be. There has been a historical concern by Labor Secretariat that community colleges will take over WIOA, WIBs and Career Centers. In other states, most of the activities are conducted by community colleges. Andrew agreed that community colleges run career centers all over the nation.

Rosalin asked what the opinion of other WIBs is concerning consolidation. Rafael answered that the people who think they will be the beneficiary are for it and others are against it. Rafael said five years ago he opposed the WIB Association moving the consolidation process forward. He was clear to Don Gillis, who was in favor of consolidation, that as a member of the Mass Workforce Board Association all MA WIBs are paying fees and dues and that all WIBs should be protected by the Association.

The three NE WIBs are meeting tomorrow with Secretary Walsh, higher education and other economic development representative to talk Greater Lawrence Tech. Apart from a LMI review, the nature of the meeting is unknown.

VII. Other Business

Rafael said it will be an interesting six months because this is a local election year and it is unclear what will happen.

Juan asked if a new mayor comes in, in his role as CEO, can he/she decide not to move forward with NECC being the new OSCC operator. Rafael said they could but not right away. By inauguration the College will have been the operator for six months. A new CEO would have to find cause to terminate NECC's contract then rebid and select a new operator. Juan asked if the MVWIB is signing a contract with NECC for a specific amount of years. Rafael said, as stipulated by WIOA, the contract will be for four years with annual reviews.

Andy said there were a couple of interesting articles he read about NECC. The first was about a new training program with Whittier Regional Technical School. It's funded through the Workforce Skills Cabinet. WRTS will be changing their machine shop into one for higher-end advanced manufacturing. That will be an interesting development for the region. The second article was about NECC looking to offer culinary training and this points back to the grants update section in our agenda; when we

diversify our trainings and increase our offerings, we see results. The MVWIB deserves credit for their grant development, they are doing it right and seeing results.

Bob Wescott asked if NECC is running a program that is suitable for some of our customers and would they be able to plug into it. Rafael said we cannot have a preferred training vendor but that we can jointly apply for new grants.

Rosalin said she was shocked and sad to hear about Mary Kivell's passing. She wants to acknowledge the work that she did. Rafael said he would like to have either her husband or children at the next quarterly meeting and provide recognition to Mary. There has been discussion of naming a room/area in the MVWIB after her.

Ron asked whether we are looking into robotics training. There's a junior college in Minnesota that guarantees jobs in this field. Perhaps the MWWIB should consider training in drone manufacturing. Rafael said we are sort of doing that right now through the electronics assembly program that is part of NAMC. Rafael added that there is company in Lowell called iRobot that delivers robotic technology based solutions and we are trying to work with them through NAMC.

VIII. Adjourn

Having no further business Rosalin Acosta made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Andrew Herlihy, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Corina Ruiz

Recorder