



Anna Jaques Hospital
25 Highland Avenue
Newburyport, MA 01950

QUARTERLY MEETING

Minutes
Tuesday, April 26, 2016
7:30 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rosalin Acosta, Edward Bartkiewicz, Joseph Bevilacqua, Stacey Bruzzese, Sr. Eileen Burns, Ron Contrado, Dr. Lane Glenn, Andrew Herlihy, Rosa Lopez, Joselyn Marte, Peter Matthews, Michael Munday, Ann Ormond, Steve Salvo, Kathryn Sweeney, Abel Vargas, Ellen Weinhold, Bob Westcott, Cal Williams, Juan Yepez

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Francisco Brea, Cesar Camargo, Rachel Concepcion, Brian DePena, Dennis DiZoglio, Atty. Wendy Estrella, Michael Fiato, Evelyn Friedman, Supt. John Lavoie, Jeff Linehan, Supt. Maureen Lynch, Rosa Muñoz, Marianne Paley-Nadel, Carol Riemer, Donna Rivera, Fred Shaheen, Michael Strem, John Terrault, Sr., Stanley Usovicz, Anita Worden

GUESTS PRESENT:

Michael Bevilacqua, Arthur Chilingirian, Cindy Key, Paul O'Brien for Rep. James Kelcourse

STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono, Matthias Bohler, Cristy Gomez, Franklin Fernandez, Mary Kivell, Brian Norris, Corina Ruiz

1. Call to Order & Welcome

A quorum being present, Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:50 a.m. and introduced Anna Jaques Hospital President and CEO, Mark Goldstein.

Mr. Goldstein said that he was pleased that the board was having their meeting at the hospital. He then provided an update on what the hospital is doing. He said that health care is a business that operates on a thin margin and that Anna Jaques sees a margin of 1% or 2% on a \$125 million annual budget. Mr. Goldstein said that they are expanding their primary base to the surrounding communities. He mentioned that Haverhill has a population of 63,000 and they have a long standing relationship through a women's and children's practice. They now have a clinical affiliation with Beth Israel to expand primary care and added three physicians as there is a shortfall of primary care physicians. They are also adding a medical

office building in the Primrose area which will house physician's offices and will kick-off in July. Mr. Goldstein said that they also added three more primary care physicians in Amesbury. He said that the hospital wants to remain independent and invest in the community by adding new services while also having Boston area physicians come up to the community. He said that you have to grow and recreate yourself through the years.

Peter Matthews then said that he was born at Anna Jaques and Mr. Goldstein said that they do an annual event and photograph of people who were born at the hospital and would make sure they invite Mr. Matthews to the next event.

2. Approval of Minutes of January 26, 2016

Peter Matthews then called for a motion on the minutes of the January 26, 2016 board meeting.

Motion by Cal William to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2016 meeting as submitted. Bob Westcott seconded the motion. Discussion followed.

Sr. Eileen asked about the status of the youth RFP and if the board would be reviewing proposals. Rafael Abislaiman said that the proposals would be approved by the Planning Committee. Sr. Eileen then said that she thought that the RFP had been mentioned at the last board meeting but didn't see it mentioned in the minutes. Chairman Peter Matthews said that the minutes would be checked and amended if necessary and presented for approval at the next meeting. [*The Youth Group RFP is mentioned on page 7 of January's quarterly minutes, in the last paragraph of Cal William's report.*]

3. Report of Chair

Peter Matthews welcomed board members and said that his remarks today would focus on the Combined State Plan document excerpt in the meeting folders. The pages provide an overview of Massachusetts' Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (or WIOA) plan recently submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor. The full document runs to over 300 pages.

The first thing to note on the page entitled 'Combined Plan: Vision Statement' is that our workforce development system hopes to benefit all Massachusetts residents. Although it hopes to benefit all, the second thing to note is that career pathways services are provided to individuals. The individuals helped onto or in career pathways are supposed to become more informed, educated and skilled workers in Massachusetts. This workforce are supposed to make Commonwealth employers more globally competitive.

Peter said that perhaps people who do not need, or who do not get, our help finding a job, or getting education or skills training for a job, indirectly benefit by Massachusetts career pathways because they live in a State with more perceived fairness and consequently with less turbulence and crime. Although everyone may derive direct or indirect benefits from our workforce development system, the individuals supported via career pathways are logically the ones helped to become more informed, educated and skilled.

Apart from helping to foster and maintain an orderly environment where businesses can function, business demands are advertised as being met and a thriving economy fostered by the individual people served and the outcomes achieved by the individuals served in our

system's career centers. The next few paragraphs outlines the specific individuals that the Commonwealth's WIOA plan proposes to support.

Peter continued his remarks stating that our workforce development system consults with employers about their needs. The importance of Career Center Partners is greatly increased and they take part in discussions with employers. Though they existed under WIA, the role of Career Center Partners greatly increases under WIOA. Their importance is brought to the fore by the phrase 'WIOA partners will work to' that you can see right before the four bulleted elements listed in bold letters.

WIOA clearly demands that the workforce development system be composed of us, WIBs or Workforce Development Boards, mandated to always be at least 51% private sector businesses, and Career Center Partners, many of whom are on WIB State and Regional Boards. WIBs or WDBs oversee not only regional and State Career Center staff, but also, to some extent, Career Center partners who may or who may not have a presence at Career Centers. These partners are part of the system throughout the country. In Massachusetts, they include Mass Rehabilitation, Mass Commission for the Blind, MA Department for Transitional Assistance, DESE's Adult and Community Learning Services and other entities that serve people with barriers to employment. A list of these partners is in the far left column of the page titled Goal II – Demand-Driven Model. Our lead partner has been separately announced as being the MA Department of Career Services. Nationwide and regionally, Community Colleges seem to have a somewhat ambivalent role because they appear to be both the principal education and training vendor and a career center partner.

We board members, other business people, and Career Center partners work together to design career pathways to help career center partners' disabled, or blind, or public assistance recipient, or limited English-speaking, or less educated clients overcome barriers to employment. We don't have exact numbers or percentages but we think that those individuals are still a relatively small minority of our regional population.

Peter said that Lawrence is ahead of the curve on being business focused. Apart from MVWIB efforts, one and one-half years ago, the Lawrence Partnership was formed and it is now surveying local businesses on what their needs will be in the future. MVWIB is working with them on the survey.

Peter continued his remarks stating that apart from clients brought in by our career center partners, we have another constituency that is much more numerous and that we must serve. Some in that constituency are also part of the ones I already mentioned but others are not. All are low-income individuals and families. But most low-income individuals and families are not disabled, or blind, or collecting transitional assistance. Their issues or barriers are often undiagnosed because they work, perhaps have too much pride, and haven't been brought into public service systems, and have instead mostly avoided public or private support bureaucracies.

Some may be receiving food stamps, or the Earned Income Credit and they may thus not be fully self-sufficient, but they work most of the time. They are often the most susceptible to economic down-turns because they only have a high school degree or less. In our region, about 15% didn't graduate from high school and some have severe English barriers to

communication. They are the ones who most often come to our ValleyWorks Career Centers for face-to-face services.

Low income individual and families are much more numerous than people with other, clearer barriers to employment. Other than the MVWIB and like-minded career center staff, it is unclear which career center partner will negotiate with employers on their behalf.

The Planning Committee, Ralph and I have often said that we should let WIOA Title II programs funded by the Department of Education, primarily handle educational remediation and English language barriers while we in WIOA Title I deal with support services, labor-market driven credentialing and employment support for low-income and low middle income people. There are about seven DOE funded education remediation agencies in our region but career centers are the only publicly funded agency primarily working to help low-individuals and families find and keep jobs.

According to the Vision Statement in the Combined State Plan, WIOA will be much more complicated than WIA, the Act we operated under for the past 15 years. Under WIOA, individuals and families who are simply low income may become an undeserved minority amongst the many job seeking constituencies we are expected to help and support. From my perspective, it will be up to the Commonwealth's regional WIBs to create flexible systems responsive to the interests of all individuals who need help finding and keeping good or better jobs.

Peter said that some members of the Executive Committee participated in the recent NAWB Conference which Peter said he has attended in the past and he is pleased that they will be reporting on the conference. In a couple of weeks some board members will be attending the MassWIB conference and we look forward to hearing about that event. He then called on Bob Westcott, Ron Contrado and Cal Williams to report on the NAWB Conference.

4. Presentation

Board Treasurer Bob Westcott said that the NAWB event was a bit hectic with 57 presentations, large meetings and other smaller sessions. Obviously they couldn't go to all of them. Bob said that there were vendors who were trying to sell their services on how to report and get better statistics. He said that every WIB is facing problems with youth. Many kids have checked out and he sees this through his work with the Exchange Club. He noted that it is difficult to solve 12 years of failure with \$6,000. He mentioned a program in the San Bernardino County WIB where they get youth to a one day event they design that brings them to talk to businesses and change some beliefs they may have. Kids attract other kids. This is a brother and sister company that gets kids involved. He also mentioned that he learned that you may use money for preventing teen pregnancy in employment training. They have had this program over ten years and it has been very successful.

Ron Contrado said that this was his first conference and it was extremely impressive. His take away was the value of networking and the fact that he met interesting people. He mentioned that there was a lot of talk on economic development and wondered if we should be focusing more on that in the WIB. He knows that in our WIB region the MVPC and others are working on economic development but wondered if there is a coordinated effort in our WIB area.

There are a lot of opportunities to gather the forces in existence and the WIB could take the lead to bring together and effort on economic development.

Youth Committee Chair Cal Williams said that his take away is that our WIB, Community College, and Career Center are ahead of the curve. There was discussion at the conference regarding youth and the revolving door, lack of soft skills necessary and determination. He mentioned that the employers want them to be on time, properly use cell phone only when not at work, dress appropriately, and communicate effectively. Cal mentioned the high cost of turnover and that folks are wondering whether we are throwing good money after bad.

He mentioned that he serves on Northern Essex Community College Employer Advisory Board and asked President Lane Glenn to speak to what they are doing in this regard.

President Glenn said that the college has expanded soft skills in the area around internships with resume and interview workshops integrated across the curriculum. He spoke about a planned community event on May 19 where students can meet employers. The college surveys indicate that 95% of their graduates are either employer or transferred to four-year schools.

Cindy Key talked about Career 101 at ValleyWorks Career Center which offers online and blended learning. They focus on needs and improving math skills with folks showing significant gains. Cindy said that a key piece is soft skills not only for youth but adults and professionals which helps them work toward a national certification.

5. Reports of Committee Chairs

• *Planning Committee*

Planning Committee Chair Juan Yopez said that, as the budget page indicates, we've spent too little on the WIOA youth category. That's because we're having difficulties getting them into our door at ValleyWorks and enrolling them. This is at least in part due to our youth academic eligibility standards. We've focused on high school graduates rather than dropouts and that continues to present issues at our Career Center. Some of you may remember that, in the past we trained and educated mostly high school dropouts. Since 2012 we've trained very few, if any at all. In 2012 and 2013 we addressed the under-enrollment situation with in-school programs. We had about 25 one year and 20 the other. These figures were not unusual because most WIA youth training in Massachusetts was comprised of group in-school youth programming. Now, under WIOA, 75% of the youth we serve must be out of school.

Juan said that as a result of what he just reported, this past quarter the Planning Committee authorized a youth group RFP for one or two group training programs. If a vendor or vendors provide good responses, we will enroll up to 16 to 24 youth who may have or not have high school diplomas, and who may be performing at below grade 7.9.

Please know that the Federal definition of out of school youth includes high school graduates. Our youth ITA academic requirements only kept 16 and 17 year olds out of training. Those youth 18 years old or older were eligible for training under the WIA or WIOA 'Adult' category. Under our regional guidelines, adults don't need high school diplomas and just need to reach an average 6.9 academic grade level. We often transfer Adult category money into the WIOA

Dislocated Worker category so we are not denying older adults our training funds as a result of our youth guidelines.

We continue to have a remediation component even for high school grads. Many of the high school grads that we serve test at below 7.9 in one or another academic category and we have a policy that states that training vendors need to bring them up to at least grade 9 levels. A small minority that we enroll are at level 9, most of them are below. Some of the youth we have not been serving could most likely get a job, and possibly a GED. But a majority of Planning Committee members continue to think that it is incorrect for our system to look like an institutional alternative to high school graduation. It's a symbolic thing because our training numbers in no way match the number of kids that drop out in this region. There are many more drop-outs than there are WIOA Title I funds to train them. There are also other WIOA programs, the ones that fall under WIOA Title II, which are funded and created to address ESOL and academic remediation issues. They unfortunately don't have much youth enrollment.

Juan said that we know that we are dealing with societal issues beyond our ability to correct. The majority of the Planning Committee think that we are not sufficiently reaching out to kids that fit our policy guidelines. We are also struggling with whether any regional academic requirement that impacts program access is against the law. WIOA clearly states that regions can create local requirements and prioritize funding according to those standards and policies. The grey area in question is then when those standards and policies contradict the law.

In the near future we will try to address the issue by offering group programs for youth without high school diplomas and with lower academic requirements but we don't know whether even that is legal. If it is, our role will be to balance between how much to dedicate to ITAs that still require a high school diploma and how much to group training programs that don't.

Juan said that he would like to ask members to consider whether regional funds are better spent training economically disadvantaged youth with lots of barriers or economically disadvantaged youth who may not want to go to college full-time but instead prepare for work via our training and take advantage of job opportunities. Please also be aware, that most of our youth trainees live in Lawrence and that the Lawrence Public School System can keep kids in school up to 22 years old. Consider the cost of having no entry requirements and consequently duplicating academic remediation programs currently offered by Lawrence Public Schools.

We need to consider the cost of any option and whether the option is economically and socially sustainable in the long term. By not allowing any standards, we may be creating expectations and ways of behaving that we as a country will not be able to afford in the future. He said that it is our place to elevate these issues and discuss them. None of them are black and white and all of them are complicated. We are the only region in the state that has created youth academic entry standards. We are also the only region in the state that argued to expand summer job opportunities for all poor kids and not just the ones who were court involved or had criminal records, or who were drop-outs.

The majority of Planning Committee members wonder what a WIBs purpose is if not to discuss and at least temporarily decide on these issues depending on the drop-out rate, unemployment, job availability and other factors.

Jocelyn Marte said that the LPS is only accepting students up to age 22 for SPED. If they arrive late in the school year and cannot speak English they are not taking them. Rafael mentioned that Nelson Butten spoke before the Youth Committee and mentioned that there are 150 kids enrolled in special high school programs and also spoke of LPS efforts to improve graduation rates and pull back kids who have dropped out. Jocelyn said that those youth may be attending the Phoenix Academy.

Eddie Bartkiewicz said that he feels that, under WIOA, this WIB is out of line and may be incurring disallowed costs. He said that he needs to talk to folks about that.

- ***Youth Committee***

Youth Committee Chair Cal Williams reported that the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (the MVWIB) is currently seeking proposals to provide remedial education and job skills training for inner-city Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)-eligible Out-of-School Youth, ages 17 through 24 living in or near Lawrence, Haverhill, Methuen, Amesbury or Newburyport. Organizations eligible to apply include: 501Cs, for-profits, DESE-funded remedial education and ESOL programs. Entities that are funded by WIOA Title II funds or in clear partnership with them will be given a 10 point preference. The RFP was released on Wednesday, March 30, 2016 and the deadline to submit the RFP is tomorrow, Wednesday, April 27, 2016 by 2:00 PM. Timely delivery of submissions is the sole responsibility of the bidder and the deadline will be strictly enforced. The transmission of proposals either via internet or by fax is not permitted. The MVWIB reserves the right to reject any and all proposals.

Cal said that this quarter, we hosted the Job Shadow Day for Haverhill High School students. It was an exciting experience for students and employers alike. We worked together with guidance counselors in a large team effort that made this day work out very well! Students were able to learn firsthand about potential career interests from front line workers in different career fields. The students who participated were greatly helped by making a connection with prospective employers. Job Shadow Day helped students realize that a career after high school is within their reach. After weeks of preparation 9 Haverhill businesses hosted students for the day.

Cal said that we continue to strengthen our relationships with school administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors to provide career development education/activities to as many students as possible. Our staff has done a tremendous job educating school administrators and guidance about our career development activities. Our activities offer students a framework in which to link the knowledge and skills they learn at school with future jobs and careers in the workforce. Connecting Activities and ValleyWorks staff have been working hard getting Lawrence High School students ready for the 2nd annual Job Fair to be held at the Lawrence High School Campus on April 27, 2016. The Business Services team had recruited over 20 employers for this event. Jessy Abramson has been providing career awareness and exploration, and work readiness through workshops. She is helping students be better able to

recognize the importance of their academic work to the development of skills that employers seek when hiring new employees.

There are again funding opportunities to serve our Merrimack Valley Youth. The 2016 Summer YouthWorks proposal was submitted to Commonwealth Corporation. The funding allocated for our region is slightly larger than last year and will allow us to place 267 Youth in subsidized employment. 175 youth from Lawrence, 66 from Haverhill and 26 from Methuen will have summer jobs. We will greatly increase these numbers via our Mayors' Initiative partners. Cal said that this year, youth will be allowed to work up to 30 hours per week at \$10.00 per hour for about 6.5 weeks. Youth participation in the competency-based work-readiness Signal Success 15 hour curriculum is required prior to job placement. Signal Success is a comprehensive curriculum designed by Commonwealth Corporation and tested by education and workforce development partners to help young people develop essential skills for future success. Youth receive systematic instruction in core soft skills while engaging in meaningful future planning.

Cal mentioned that if you or your company or organization is planning to hire youth this summer, the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB) may be able to pay all or part of the wages of a group of your prospective youth employees. We may be able to help defray the salary costs of youth if they meet eligibility under YouthWorks and submit a completed application. If you have not yet signed up to become a worksite please contact Susan Ingham at singham@valleyworksc.org. If you need any information about the youth application, please contact Cristy Gomez at ccgomez@mvwib.org

We will be submitting a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the FY'17 Bridging the Opportunity Gap Initiative (BOG) to Commonwealth Corporation. The Bridging the Opportunity Gap Initiative (BOG) RFP is designed to support innovative programming for youth committed to the Department of Social Services, usually after some form of correctional confinement. We are going to try to renegotiate processes to make the program more employer friendly.

Sr. Eileen Burns said that the window for the OSY Youth Training RFP was very short at 5 weeks. It is difficult to put together a program with academic remediation and job training for males. Merging two pots is a great idea but takes time to align and work out the mechanics. She said that Essex County has some of the richest and poorest areas and we need to look at how we are making decisions. As board members we need to know what the reality is and how to best serve. She also asked if the WIB will be disappearing.

Rafael Abislaiman said that it is difficult to create a new program in five weeks. Some RFPs require more or less time. At the bidders conference we were looking for an outline of something doable that wasn't CNA training. It is very hard to submit a proposal without some experience in another field. Cal said that we are feeling our way going forward and will look for ways to give training respondents more time.

Regarding consolidation, Peter Matthews said that he had attended a meeting with the Governor who said that if you are doing a good job and getting good results you don't have to worry. Rafael said that talk of consolidation has been kicking around for a long time but, as Peter indicates, the Governor was clear and the law states that if a board and region are

functioning well, consolidation will only happen if the board and CEO want it. The map in the meeting packet is only of super regions and not of WIBs.

Eddie Bartkiewicz said that information in the Combined State Plan is for planning purposes only. The State wants WIBs to take the information and work collectively with one another. He said that another part of the process is the MOAs, etc. It is going to be a complicated process and Eddie suggested a having a series of presentation. He indicated that Biz Works staff and Alice Sweeney would give excellent presentations.

Bob Westcott said that collaborating with other regions might help with coordinating vendors and clients

- ***Nominating Committee***

Nominating Committee Chair Ann Ormond said that there was no Nominating Committee report this meeting.

- ***Finance Report***

Treasurer Bob Westcott said that we are fortunate to have such a find fiscal department and that spending is on track with the exception of youth which will increase over the summer and referred to the budget update sheet in the meeting packets.

6. Report of Executive Director

Rafael Abislaiman said that we are ahead of schedule according to our plan with the exception of youth. He also said that the Feds and Massachusetts DOL have made major cuts in WIOA but Merrimack Valley has been reduced by only 7%. Rafael said that we received a slight increase last year. Rafael also said that it is increasingly difficult for training vendors to survive unless they have other sources of funding in addition to WIOA. Rafael also reported that we are mandated to issue an RFP for the Career Center operator this year. The awardee may be another operator or the current operator and we are working on the RFP.

Eddie Bartkiewicz said that serving folks with barriers is a big issue and that the MVWIB may be breaking the law. Rafael said that we serve a region with two immigrant cities and many recent arrivals. We also have many folks with physical, mental and social barriers because the State has housed those agencies here. We had the only school system under State Receivership for several years until Springfield schools also entered receivership. We must prioritize amongst a lot of people in need. We took the step to not train but ALWAYS serve those youth without a high school diploma because we want to reinforce kids staying in schools. Training can help them get a credential but statistics show that most people without a high school diploma will live a lifetime of poverty. Some high school graduates test at lower than junior high levels.

Sr. Eileen said that the TABE test is not aligned with the CR101 test. Eddie said that the problem is with Lawrence setting barrier limits. It is the only WIB in the state to do so. Rafael said that if training vendors can set academic standards on who they admit, why can't the WIB.

Chili said that until a decision is made we should not go backward with any disallowed costs and Eddie said that he never goes backward. Rafael asked what the formal process is leading

to a decision whether it be judicial or administrative at the State or Federal level. Eddie said the process is always WIOA law and he said it is good to have this discussion within the board. Bob Westcott said that how can you ask a vendor to take people far below academic competency and ask them to provide training that will stick and provide higher incomes. Eddie said that RFP can indirectly set the standards by the type of occupations people train for.

Peter Matthews said that this type of discussion is exactly what he indicated he wanted at board meetings. He welcomes the interactive discussion.

Rafael then continued his report stating that we will be moving from our current site in a few months. We will get a lower cost per square foot which will cover the cost of the move in about three years. Eddie Bartkiewicz said that DUA is getting a 40% cut and folks could be bumping into DCS. He mentioned that they are closing a call in center in Springfield and Worcester.

He also cited the new law and the new fiscal year, along with layoffs, as reasons for his wanting to serve on the Planning Committee. He mentioned that an early out incentive at the state could have a dramatic effect.

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Adjournment

Having no further business Ann Ormond made a motion to adjourn and Andrew Herlihy seconded the motion. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Kivell
Recorder