



**Northern Essex Community College**  
**100 Elliot Street, Room TC103A**  
**Haverhill, MA**

**QUARTERLY MEETING**

**Minutes**  
**Friday, February 13, 2015**  
**7:30 AM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Joseph Bevilacqua, Francisco Brea, Melissa Cerasuolo, Ron Contrado, Dennis DiZoglio, Andrew Herlihy, Susan Jepson, , Joselyn Marte, Peter Matthews, Michael Munday, Rosa Muñoz, Ann Ormond, Stanley Usovicz, Abel Vargas, Bob Westcott, Cal Williams, Juan Yopez

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Rosalin Acosta, Edward Bartkiewicz, Christine Bradshaw, Cesar Camargo, Rachel Concepcion, Brian DePena, Supt. William DeRosa, Atty. Wendy Estrella, Michael Fiato, Evelyn Friedman, Joseph Gangi, Jr., Dr. Lane Glenn, Robert Ingala, Steve Kfoury, Supt. John Lavoie, Jeff Linehan, Rosa Lopez, Michael Munday, George Noel, Marianne Paley-Nadel, Cindy Phelan, Carol Riemer, Donna Rivera, Steve Salvo, John Sarro, Fred Shaheen, Jeff Sheehy, Michael Strem, David Tibbetts, Stanley Usovicz, Anita Worden

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Jessica Andors, Gary Fountain, Jane Sullivan

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono, Franklin Fernandez, Cristy Gomez, Brian Norris, Corina Ruiz

**1. Call to Order**

A quorum being present, Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:50 a.m.

**2. Welcome and Introductions**

Peter Matthews thanked everyone for being present. He said that, with a new board, it would be nice to reintroduce ourselves and asked everyone to go around and state their name and business.

**3. Approval of Minutes of October 28, 2014**

Chairman Matthews asked for a motion on the minutes of the October 28, 2014 quarterly board meeting.

**Motion by Dennis DiZoglio to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2014 meeting as submitted. Francisco Brea seconded the motion and motion passed unanimously.**

### **3. Report of Chair**

Chairman Matthews gave a brief report covering 2014 successes and how we are moving forward with some minor changes this year. More standardized information will be presented at meetings. We are trying to keep everyone informed and participating in the board.

In 2014, ValleyWorks Career Center along with the MVWIB served over 12,500 individuals spending about \$6M. It achieved over 2,000 documented job placements and job-trained roughly 250 men women and youth of whom 73% got jobs or enrolled in additional college or occupational training.

The MVWIB achieved the highest youth performance numbers in the Commonwealth. Peter referenced the chart behind him which showed that the Merrimack Valley achieved 124% of goals. Compared to prior years, we raised Lawrence youth summer employment numbers by 89% from 160 to 303 verified summer jobs. This was in part due to Mayor Rivera creating his Youth Initiative that included private sector donations alongside our established Youthworks program. Region-wide the MVWIB helped 437 youth get jobs and that is terrific.

Peter continued by saying that Mayor Rivera appointed twelve new Board members and requested a new chairman, himself, who was then elected by the Board. In 2014, the VWCC and MVWIB successfully applied for grants totaling about \$2,200,000 in NEG, MA Economic Development, CommCorp Manufacturing, and U.S. EPA funding. We received State approval of our revised Strategic Plan and passed 4 fiscal and programmatic monitoring's without issues or disallowed costs. We are fully Certified. Peter pointed out that there's a lot of work being done in the planning for WIOA and that it may alter future certification criteria.

The MVWIB helped support a LFDC School STEM initiative and submitted a nomination that resulted in their lead teacher receiving National and State awards. Lastly, we opened a new Haverhill Career Center right here in NECC and reduced Haverhill career center occupancy costs by 84%. The new site will help us save over \$153,000 per year.

Going forward, new Treasurer Bob Wescott will help everyone understand what money is spent, how much money is being spent, and for what results. Our system is difficult to understand so we are going to try our best to break it down into parts so that we can more clearly see results alongside information on how money is spent to get them. We'll better know how successful we are in given areas. The Board may better able work changes and how we partner with others to get people working. He emphasized that everything that seeks continuous improvement is a work in progress and asked members to bear with him as we work to better understand and improve our systems.

### **5. Presentation by Jessica Andors of Lawrence Community Works**

The Chairman introduced Jessica Andors from the Lawrence Community Works (LCW) who has been a partner of the MVWIB and VWCC on various programs. Jessica thanked the Board for

having her. She said she was not going to talk about LCW but rather the Working Cities Challenge (WCC).

The WCC is a collaborative Lawrence effort and the MVWIB and VWCC are partner members. A few years ago, the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston decided to do some research on what makes small industrial cities succeed or fail. They looked at cities around the country and compared the ones that were doing better, those able to reinvent themselves, against the ones that were not doing so well.

What they found was that it was never one specific initiative or industry sector that was key. Across the board they found that cross sector collaboration to be the key to success amongst cities. The for-profit business sector, the private not-for-profit sector, the public-sector in all its forms work closely together and integrate their efforts in successful cities. They share a common vision about what's necessary to make a City move forward.

Ms. Andors said that the Federal Reserve Bank is a monetary research institution not known for on-the-ground activism. The Boston Fed made an unusual move in deciding to help city activists make a difference. To do so, it created competition amongst Massachusetts gateway cities asking them how they could spur cross-sector collaboration within their communities. They raised some money from the State but got most of it from private foundations around the country.

There is no Fed money going into this initiative. They selected a jury of private and public folk and ran an open challenge where only one application per City could be submitted. They wanted to see a proposal that would either create new cross-sector collaboration or build and increase existing ones.

Lawrence was selected as the winner out of the 22 gateways cities that applied. There was a tremendous amount of work that went into putting a collaborative together.

The biggest challenge and opportunity Lawrence had was the turnaround and receivership of the Lawrence Public School system. The WCC felt like the school had a lot of great, creative and effective strategies for increasing student achievement. In the turnaround, LPS also had a plan for parent engagement but had not figured out how they wanted to do it. In our partner conversations we discussed what could be done to help turnaround the school system and move the City forward. We decided it best to invest in the families with kids in Lawrence Public Schools system.

One of the best things we can do is help more of them find employment and steady employment. That became the goal of our collaborative. The school system was putting together this family resource center where family can come and receive integrated support. We felt that we could bring the other piece in, which is building on the strength of families, and helping them connect to resources and opportunities for employment and academic advancement.

Jessica explained that one of the reasons Lawrence was so successful in getting the top prize was that we had two very important elements that the Feds were focusing on. One was

resident engagement in the process and, second, was evidence of system change happening. The Fed wanted to use these elements to change the way things are getting done.

We were addressing that within the schools themselves. The schools were seeing themselves as hubs for the success of families and not only of children. Everyone knows that when we've done well in life and in school, most of the time stable families are part of the cause and a significant help to children. The other element of system change is highly effective workforce development.

MVWIB and VWCC have a good reputation around the state but your services are not reaching the majority of Lawrence residents because federal funding constraints make it difficult to work with harder to reach families. There are immigrant families with significant language barriers who are adjusting to a new culture. There has been a gap for a long time in Lawrence around a collective vision around economic development and a strategy around economic development and the City.

WCC thought we needed to bring the business community into this and the Mayor's office to have a collective buy-in into the idea of what are we doing to connect the supply and demand side. How are we comprehensively working to grow the businesses that exist in the City, to attract new businesses to the region and to make sure the jobs in those businesses are being connected to Lawrence residents specifically?

We have an extremely hard working and entrepreneurial immigrant population in the City and second and third generations have been here. But there are language and education barriers and there is sometimes disconnects between the jobs in the region and the workforce in Lawrence.

Jess said that being a part of the planning process for a year and a half has her very excited, optimistic and hopeful about the way things are going in Lawrence. As part of this collaboration we have an employer cultivation sub-committee and we have representation from the MVWIB, VWCC, the Mayor's Office of Business Development, NECC and staff of the Lawrence Working Families Initiative. We share information about employers cultivation and employer needs. Recently the group went to Polartec for a visit and the LWFI Project Manager was able to make a connection with the HR person department to cultivate that relationship and figure out is there a way we can create more of a pipeline in that company for Lawrence residents. New Balance has an amazing Lawrence workforce in their factory but they are starting to figure out how to connect with Lawrence residents for some of the white collar jobs.

It's very encouraging to see this kind of collaboration and openness and information sharing. Barbara Zeimetz of the VWCC was on the WCC board and helped with the original application. When Barbara Zeimetz retired, Chili of the VWCC stepped in. There will be a formal MOU between the WCC and VWCC. VWCC will be providing services at the site in ways that works for the career center. VWCC staff will attend major events when there will be a lot of people present. This is being done in such a way that the efforts of existing organizations aren't duplicated but rather builds on those strengths and brings them together in various ways.

Other than the Project Manager, they've also hired a family coach. The job of the family coach is to meet and connect with families to help them figure out their life goals, their employment and educational goals, and how do we can help them move forward.

We don't want to put someone in a job they won't be successful in and that's why we partner with ESOL providers. Lawrence Community Works helps with financial coaching and asset program, social services agencies.

Jessica concluded by saying she's very hopeful and that so far they've had four job placements which has been very encouraging. One of the ways they're trying to connect the LPS parent population and the seniors in high school is through a series of industry panels where they are bringing HR representatives from different industry sectors and regions. With this they can get an idea of all the careers and jobs available and the basic skills requirements that you need in order to succeed in specific careers. We will have the representatives do mock interviews as well. Coordination is being done with Chili as well to complement what each other is doing and sharing contacts.

Stan Usovicz commended Jessica on an excellent presentation. He said that she articulated what has been missing in many places in Massachusetts. Education and employer outreach end up being the key ingredients to success. Stan stated that a great deal of what takes place in collaborations depends on leadership.

Jessica said that what she was trying to say is that a Mayor can't do it alone and that it's great to have Mayor Rivera. Part of what tipped it in their favor was that soon after Mayor Rivera was elected, he came down with their team to the jury presentation they did in Boston at the Federal Reserve along with Jeff Riley, the LPS receiver.

Rafael acknowledged Abel Vargas and Andrew Herlihy, the two economic development directors for the two major cities in our region. They helped in the development of working cities proposals. He also noted Joselyn Marte, from the Adult Learning Center (ALC) in attendance. ALC has the biggest ESOL program in Northeastern Massachusetts. ALC and the MVWIB/VWCC both work within the WIA/WIOA funding stream. They are funded under WIA Title II and the MVWIB/VWCC are funded by WIA Title I.

The ALC is tasked with some of the things that Jessica discussed, ESOL and GED, but as Jess stated, the resources don't necessarily meet the need. Working Cities is doing a lot to supplement WIA resources used by either the MVWIB/VWCC or by institutions like ALC. Rafael also made the observation that Barbara Zeimetz worked for the MVWIB and not VWCC. She was the MVWIB Deputy Director.

Susan Jepson thanked Jessica for a very good presentation. She asked about funding length and about strategies for sustainability. Jessica said they were very conscious about that from the beginning. She's very pleased with the commitment they received from the LPS to institutionalize this effort. This grant is for 3 years and there might be renewal grants. Jeff Riley said that if this initiative works and we see results, then LPS will institutionalize positions within the Family Resource Room. WCC's hope is to build, within the next 3 years, a strong quadrant of parents that can help advocate for this effort within the Family Resource Center.

The other nice thing the Federal Reserve is doing is to convene funders in the region and bring the winning teams in front of them.

Rafael noted Stan's comments about leadership. Stan knows about it because he was Mayor of Salem, MA. In this area we had two Mayors involved in our successful Working Cities application. Both of them are Hispanic and both of them represent the majority of Lawrence residents. Rafael thinks that it made a big difference that they were both part of the majority Lawrence population. The prior Mayor made the decision to put LPS into receivership.

The former Mayor had designated Rafael as Chair of the Superintendent search committee. Although the committee received really good candidates, the committee, appointed by the former Mayor, made the decision not to select any of them and the Mayor backed them so the State took over Lawrence Public Schools. That was done at a significant political cost to the former Mayor and frankly that sacrifice was critical to making Working City's positive changes possible. Mayor Rivera is driven and dedicated to improving LPS. It's that combination of two Hispanic Mayors who want to improve Lawrence kids' life chances that has made an enormous difference to the City of Lawrence.

Francisco Brea said that he hopes we continue in that good direction. He supports the MVWIB's and the City of Lawrence efforts to help kids. He mentioned how kids who have dropped out of school get help through the AFL-CIO apprenticeship program. He wants to work more closely with WCC to help kids who don't want to go to college. He ended by saying that he doesn't think that the last Mayor had anything to do with the State taking receivership of Lawrence Public Schools. The State simply took LPS away from the Mayor. Jessica told Francisco that they should talk because WCC has a small pool of funds that may support apprenticeships.

Cal said that it helps to bring employers and HR into classrooms to talk to youngsters and let them know how education impacts their lives. HR can tell them that they hire people for a living and get their attention quickly. He asked Jessica how they she's doing outreach to employers, especially employer HR teams, and how they are using the WIB and the Chambers.

Jessica said they have used the WIB to some extent but not so much the Chambers. She continued by saying that at the beginning of the application process, they had a number of financial institution partners such as the Merrimack Valley Federal Credit Union. The first employer panel will be in March and it will be with the financial institution sector. In healthcare they already have relationships with Lawrence General Hospital and Greater Lawrence Family Health Center. They will be very much interested working with the WIB and the Chamber to reach more healthcare employers and not only hospitals. In the manufacturing sector, which will be the May panel, that's where we need the most work and help. We now have New Balance, Solectria and Polartec lined up. Cal said that maybe they can find a way in working with Joe Bevilacqua and his staff to get the message out on volunteer opportunities.

Peter said he was very fortunate, on behalf of the MVWIB, to serve on the LPS stakeholders group which was phase one when the State receivership occurred. Statistics that he saw from the Career Center and the WIB, and the analysis done by the stakeholders group, shows the importance of the Career Center and WIB. Schools and they should partner to make necessary

changes needed to improve the dropout rates and graduation rates. We want to make sure that our system doesn't become a GED secondary education school but that we instead help get people employed. After 3 years, it's nice to see this happening. We need to be there in whatever role to help get people working and making sure that the families and young adults understand that you need a high school education. If they did not get a high school degree, kids need to know the paths they can take. Jess has done a tremendous job so far.

## **6. Reports of Committee Chairs**

- ***Planning Committee***

Planning Committee Chair Juan Yepez said that the WIOA implementation process is upon us. There is still a ways to go before we have adequate clarity on what's expected of us as a region. Federal officials were to have released more definitive guidance in January but that has been postponed till the spring.

As some heard in Don Gillis's presentation during the last quarterly meeting, the number of WIA regions in Massachusetts may be reduced during WIOA implementation. He explained that in one scenario our region would be combined with Greater Lowell. In another it would be Greater Lowell, North Shore and us. It is also possible that those three regions along with Metro North, which means Cambridge and other cities and towns north of Boston could become one region. New Hampshire has only one region and Massachusetts has a total of sixteen but it is unlikely that the State will reduce its WIOA regions to less than a handful. If there is reconfiguration, it will probably take a couple of years to implement. He said that the City of Lawrence is our host city and Mayor Rivera and the Board would be consulted during that process.

Juan continued by saying that the City of Lawrence currently has fiscal liability and it may or may not be able to continue in that role if Workforce Investment Areas are consolidated. Under the current framework, the City of Lawrence has been picking up additional financial liability. If the consolidation occurs with Lawrence as a host city, City's retirement liability obligations may become too expensive for a region that is twice or more the current regions size. Some people think that current liability may not be met with the 20% contributions that the City and employees now make. Individuals currently contribute 11% of their salary and the City picks up 9%. The Board members are not liable, but the City may incur more long-term costs than the City Council would consider acceptable.

He then said that some other regions, career center and WIB regional staff are 501C3 employees so our situation may change in the years ahead. Most people already know that public sector benefits are growing issues nationwide. Under WIOA, each State's Governor is charged with consulting with WIBs and CEOs, such as Mayors or City Managers, who ultimately decide on WIA regional configurations. The Governor clearly has the greatest authority and consultation may mean asking for advice that may or may not be taken.

The Governor will likely delegate at least a portion of his authority to the Massachusetts Secretary of Labor. MA DOL staff will undoubtedly weigh-in with their own perspective on various issues. Resource allocation to state staff has varied in recent years. In the past, DOL was getting 15% of the WIA allocation; then it went down by half but now it is going back up. We will always need to work together but if State staff get more, regional staff get less.

Private sector employers should consider voicing their opinion to create an efficient system that responds to regional needs.

Juan referenced the report that was included in the packets. Chili and his staff are quickly placing people into training. Most training referrals previously occurred in the third and fourth quarter. This fiscal year, state employees working at ValleyWorks are no longer the only ones able to clear someone for training. Staff integration and cross-training now enables municipal staff to refer them. Previously there were referral delays because State workers get a positive outcome for employment and not for referrals to training. He said that although some categories are only at about 20%, they will have higher numbers at the end of the year.

The difference between WIA Adult and WIA Dislocated Worker categories is that WIA Adult funds go towards services and training for low income people with little or no recent work histories. Dislocated Worker are folks who were laid off and collect unemployment.

He added that the distributed Summary report does not have real time data. We don't get employment results until clients are exited from the state WIA data base and that doesn't happen for a minimum of three months after a person's job start date. Moreover the three-month clock restarts each time a client is recorded as receiving Career Center services. The Planning Committee will soon receive another sort of data report and it will provide timelier information. That timelier version may require updating at individuals' 90-day and 270-day employment points. Timely data will not always match longer term data but Juan was glad to say that employment achievement numbers generally go up, and not down, in the long term.

Juan said that Massachusetts doesn't have wage matching as other states do. Wage matching immediately tracks employment using contributions to the State's Department of Revenue and or contributions to a State's UI system. That was stopped in Massachusetts because of confidentiality concerns. We track vendor's student employment and certificate achievement records to help determine performance outcomes. Everyone should know that most training dollars go to entry level health care job training because that field has the most job openings. Our system is likely to improve if we diversified more training into other job sectors. We also track whether more expensive and longer-term courses have better outcomes than shorter and less expensive ones.

The unemployment rate is getting better but wage gains are not keeping pace. Folks in higher level courses expect to get \$20 or more per hour but all too often get hourly wages of \$14 or so. The percentage of Americans officially employed may be at lows not seen for over 60 years. But more people who haven't been there for a while are now starting to visit the Career Center to look for work after long term unemployment. Hope that the economy is improving appears to be increasing. He continued by saying that the tracked number of jobs and the tracked number of people employed, as well as their wages, are likely to provide better indicators of the economy than unemployed numbers.

Juan concluded by saying that there's also a budget report included in your package. Treasurer Bob Wescott will explain it in some detail but I'd like to state that the Planning Committee is now receiving this sort of information monthly. The need is greater than available funding. If we had unlimited funding we could do more but unlimited amounts of money rarely create efficiency. The WIB and its Planning Committee will continue to strive to



prioritize available resources to help job seekers find and use job opportunities. We want to help people use training funds well so that job training funds will be available for more people. The K-12 and community college system have much more resources than our system has. We're trying to encourage parents and youth to use our and their systems well.

- **Youth Council**

Youth Council Chair Cal Williams began his report stating that last quarter, the youth council was busy reviewing and analyzing the results of our 2014 Youth Summer Job Employer survey. The survey was developed by the Commonwealth Corporation to assess employers experience with the YouthWorks Summer program. It is a post-program exit survey that asks what employers now think about hiring youth, and what challenges and benefits they see in doing so. The top 3 findings for our region are the following: 72.2% of employers think "Taking Initiative" is the most important Jobs skill they were able to pass on to youth. Taking initiative beat out "Accepting Supervision" and "Collaboration/Team Work" which were both tied in second place at 55.6%. "How to act at work/Being Professional" came out on third place at 50%.

Taking initiative correlates in some way with employers' opinion of how they most helped prepare youth for future employment (018). 66.7 % think that they most helped youth job prospects by passing on "a work ethic of showing up on time and being ready to work" and "manage time and job expectations". 55.6% of the employers think that they most helped get youth ready for future employment by helping them "Build leadership skills including taking initiative". It may be that "taking initiative" includes little absenteeism as well as doing productive things without being told to do them. Cal said that it was also found that employers were positive about how youth acted or developed while at their worksite. Question 23 responses indicate that 72.2% of employer respondents would "consider hiring young people from this program even if their salaries were not fully subsidized". On question 20, 62.5% of employers stated that they "had plenty of time and the capability to provide any extra support the employee needed", but 25% stated that "I was willing to provide support to the youth employee but didn't have the time to do so".

Cal said that given that a sizable majority of employers seem to have plenty of time to provide youth with extra support, we plan to develop ways for employers to participate in the youth orientation process. Employers may be able to provide additional granularity to CommCorp curriculums. They may also be able to provide personal anecdotes related to aspects of the curriculum and other such things. Their participation in group training may also provide them with ways to contribute to the program financially by volunteering their time rather than by paying part of youth salaries or donating cash.

According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Program Year 2013 Annual Report for Workforce Investment Act programs that covers the period July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014, our region was the best in the Commonwealth in several youth categories. He said that we were number one statewide in Youth Placement in Employment or Higher Education and in the Attainment of a Degree or Certificate. Our actual performance was 124.1% and 141.4% higher than our planned goals. We met or exceeded Federal Common Measures. Hats off to Cristy, the Career Center and other MVWIB staff for delivering great services to our local youth. There's room for improvement because we were fourth in our grade performance average at 115.7% and ninth in literacy or numeracy gains. There we met only 81.6% of goal. Our low literacy and numeracy number is likely due to focusing our in-school program efforts on High School Seniors who were exited from the program within five months of enrollment. The program involved mostly counseling

toward high school graduation, job attainment or enrollment in higher education. Literacy and numeracy gains may be low since we focused on counseling and not on academic enhancements to the high school curriculum.

Cal concluded by saying that there were two in-school programs. It was decided to refund one of them - Lare's Senior Success program. It will again provide guidance and employment and training preparation services to eligible at-risk Methuen High School seniors. We may RFP to refund the other program in the future. The other youth programs - Connecting Activities, Bridging the Opportunity Gap Program, AMP It Up!, and STEM Careers in Clean Energy, are right on track and either meeting or exceeding program goals. Cal ended by saying that we will continue to develop staff to deliver state of the art services, and provide youth with the resources needed to link education with the world of work.

- ***Nominating Committee***

Ann said she has no formal nominations to present but that one of the things the Executive Committee has been working on under the leadership of Chairman Matthews is to put together a Board orientation which she is working on. She will be meeting with her colleague Melissa from the Amesbury Chamber to discuss the components of what the Board orientation will look like. We all need to be reminded what it is to be part of a Board. Some of the components we are looking at is a finance overview which Bob Wescott will help us with; understanding the many acronyms there are; Board structure and what role we play; the MVWIB by-laws; difference between WIA and WIOA and what that's going to mean.

Ann asked that if there is something any of the Board members would like to see or like to go over, please let her or any of the Executive Committee members know. The date for the orientation is TBD. Peter Matthews added that this is a work in progress and a lot of us are at different stages here but we can all use a refresher too. It's a complicated system and we are trying very hard to figure out a way to make it simply so we can all understand where we are.

## **7. Report of Executive Director**

Ralph stated noteworthy numbers in anticipation of Bob Wescott's budget presentation. The average public school student receives between two hundred thousand and a quarter of a million dollars in individual education funding. The money spent during 12 years of schooling and a year of kindergarten is about a quarter million dollars per student. Our MVWIB has a policy of only allocating \$6,000 for job individual training.

You can see that the best thing we can do is leverage prior learning into something that creates better employment. He said that we cannot correct prior academic issues in a major way. It is difficult to say because we all want to be problem solvers and help everyone. We can solve some problems but we have to target very limited resources. The critical thing is to remember is that the K-12 system receives about 40 times the money per person that that we do. If we can't help things get properly done there, then as a country we are in big trouble. One of the things this WIB has done it to remind everyone that we will dedicate our WIA or WIOA Title I youth funding to help kids who either have a high diploma or a GED. There are other WIA Title II funds, like the ones used by the Adult Learning Center, which can help people get GED's and learn English. Title II funds are dedicated to remedying language issues and to helping people get GEDs.

He continued by saying that our WIA/WIOA Title I system, really needs to focus on how to use its money, which really isn't very much, to help create conditions where everyone can move ahead to better employment. Tools like the Working Cities are wonderful because they remind everyone of the problem. The problem that we have requires constant and long-term solutions that involve parents. We are convinced that the principle remedies will nowadays be found in the public school system. We want to work closely with the public schools and Working Cities to facilitate improvement in the City of Lawrence and elsewhere in the region.

Ralph said that as some members may recall, MVWIB attempted to set up a Career Center in Lawrence High School. We wanted to have it at the HS because some of the problems we now encounter is that many find it hard to make the connection between what they are doing in school and the world of work. Unfortunately our proposal was not funded.

We're in unexplored territory as a country. Our situation now is so very different than just 60 years ago where the majority of people didn't graduate from high school. Nowadays we expect everyone to graduate from not only high school but also college. In the future, most jobs may require more than a high school degree.

Ralph concluded his report by saying that as a WIB we have a very important role - we are close to the ground and see what workers at your companies need. We can attempt to implement or create solutions that have a very specific merit - and that is to help people work. Our solutions are based on the reality we see every day. That's my principle argument for maintaining a regional WIB system in Massachusetts. The further you go from the actual labor force and from employers who deal with workers every day, the more one may get from real solutions to real problems. That's why we want to work organization like Working Cities who are on the front lines every day.

## **8. Other Business**

Bob Wescott presented the Board with a budget report. He said that everything is constrained by either State or Federal government or by the City but there is some flexibility. The Board should realize that. That is one of the things that Peter wants the board to understand - members have some power, authority and responsibility. In order to make any changes you need to know what the financial impact is and my promise is to help you get that. I love pie charts so there will be some pie charts. He said he doesn't need to understand the accounting because the accounting job Tracy Myszkowski does is excellent. There's no question about the money being spent legally but we do have some flexibility and voice on where it goes.

My promise to Peter is that I'm going to find out and work with Rafael and Tracy to find out what flexibility will help. How can funds can be applied more effectively and which can be applied with more effectiveness? When we hear success stories about how we place youth in jobs and that they are making more money, you know that we have the seeds of a tremendously successful employment program.

Bob said that our job is not to put people in make work jobs but to help them get jobs where they can help make a profit for their employer. We have to work a little harder to attract employers to come to the WIB. Bob said that currently the WIB/VWCC is not the first source for employers to find employees and maybe we can apply some funds to change that.

He continued by saying that maybe we can we get people to consider getting into an apprenticeship faster. His promise is that he will look for expenditure trends and for places where money can be better applied. Look at the Gateways City project that Lawrence is in, maybe it only takes a little leverage to make things better. Bob said that he can't remember a time where we've had a better opportunity. We have a new Mayor, a new Governor, a new Board, a new Northern Essex being aggressive in its desire to help everybody and WIB staff that really want to make a change and a difference. This is the best time to be part of the MVWIB.

Ralph mentioned that because of the snow storms, we inadvertently scheduled this meeting at the same time that the Greater Haverhill Chamber was having an awards meeting. Dr. Lane Glenn and David Tibbetts send their regrets for not attending this meeting because they had already committed to the Haverhill Chamber event. We have a third of our Board present and we met quorum by two people. There are a lot of people that aren't here today that normally are who send their regrets. He thanked attendees for braving the cold and the snow.

Juan said that going along with Bob's comment, they are always looking to see how to maximize the results that can be provided to our region and how to reduce cost. As the chairman said earlier, by moving our Haverhill office from its previous location to the college, we saved an excess of \$150,000. That is something that we will continue to look for as a Board and a team. We will check how to reduce expenses and put more dollars toward training so folks can get jobs.

Andrew Herlihy said that Mayor Fiorentini sends his regrets as he is out of town. The Mayor is very excited about the new career center presence at the college as it's a natural fit and he has heard positive comments from the public about it. Perhaps at some point the City of Haverhill can make a presentation to the board about what is going on downtown with the big harbor place project that will transform the City about the developmental initiative that they won with Mass Development. UMASS Lowell is already here, they are going to have permanent presence downtown. There's a lot of exciting things going on downtown as the City works toward urban renewal.

Rafael acknowledged Gary Fountain who is the onsite supervisor for the Career Center in Haverhill and welcomed anyone who would like to tour it.

Peter thanked everyone for attending because they made the quorum even with all the cold and snow. Lastly, Peter said that at the last Board and Executive Committee meetings they talked about more employer focus and involvement. He invited all to give ideas on what we should explore and do. We want to satisfy employer needs now, two years from now and three years from now.

## **8. Adjournment**

**Having no further business Francisco Brea made a motion to adjourn and Bob Wescott seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Corina Ruiz*  
Recorder