

**Amesbury Sports Park**

**12 South Hunt Road**

**Amesbury, MA 01913**

**QUARTERLY MEETING**

**Minutes**

**Wednesday, January 23, 2013**

**7:30 AM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Joseph Bevilacqua, Supt. William DeRosa, Susan Jepson, Dr. Lane Glenn, Robert Ingala, Melissa LaChance, Supt. John Lavoie, Peter Matthews, Michael Munday, George Noel, Ray Wrobel, Nancy Tariot, Bob Westcott, Cal Williams

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Patrick Blanchette, Ron Contrado, Brian DePena, Atty. Wendy Estrella, Joe Gangi, Jr., Gary Hale, Steve Kfoury, Atty. Robert LeBlanc, Jeff Linehan, Eric Mane, Alberto Nunez, Ann Ormond, Kevin Page, Dahianara Moran-Liranzo, Cindy Phelan, Donna Rivera, Lester Schindel, Steve Salvo, Jeff Sheehy, Evan Silverio, Michael Strem, Stanley Usovicz, Len Wilson, Juan Yepez

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Mayor Thatcher Kezer, Commissioner Richard Freeland, Arthur Chilingirian, Francisco Brea, Cheryl Goodwin, Eric Grugoire, Wally DeGuglielmo

STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Barbara Zeimetz, Corina Ruiz, Mary Kivell, Odanis Hernandez, Susan Almono, Cristy Gomez, Larry Hinkle

# 1. Call to Order

A quorum being present, Joseph Bevilacqua called the meeting to order at 7:50 am.

**2. Welcome, Introductions and Report of Chair**

Joe mentioned that in keeping with our goal to visit every part of our region, our next quarterly meeting will be held at Whittier Regional High School on April 30th. Introductions were made around the table. Joe mentioned that workforce development and economic development go hand in hand and that we have a working relationship with Mayor Kezer and Melissa LaChance, the Amesbury Chamber Executive Director. Joe then introduced Mayor Thatcher Kezer.

Mayor Kezer stated that it was a pleasure to have everyone in Amesbury and that he would like to report on all the good things going on in the City. Mayor Kezer said that the important thing is to have more jobs at the national, state and local levels. He said that the optimum time for investment is during economic downturns to make opportunities most cost effective. Amesbury has been focusing on economic development issues and he mentioned the meeting’s venue. The sports park is a famous landmark that generates jobs.

He referred to Amesbury Upper Mill area which has changed and offers the possibility of many new job which will improve the Region’s quality of life. The other half is the Lower Mill Yard which was vital to the American economy in the industrial age but that now has empty mills and a dilapidated DPW building. Amesbury has been making public sector investments to change its infrastructure. The City Council approved moving the DPW to an industrial area making the area more inviting to business investment. Mayor Kezer also spoke about a partnership with a regional bus hub for a 10,000 square foot building with 9,000 square feet for municipal offices. The town’s health and human service offices will be co-located in the building. The Mayor mentioned the new $9m (federal funds) for a senior center building that will cost Amesbury only $1.5m.

He concluded his remarks stating that it is often a challenge to convince folks to invest during hard times but when the economy comes back, we will benefit.

Joe Bevilacqua then mentioned ongoing partnerships such as Partners in Progress with Northern Essex President Dr. Lane Glenn and Middlesex Community College President Dr. Carole Cowan and the fact that they will be having an upcoming event on business issues. He also said that the Community Colleges and two technical schools and their superintendents are working together.

Joe then talked about a recent meeting with Secretary Bialecki, Secretary Goldstein and Commissioner Freeland who are working together to address workforce development and help people climb the career ladder. George Noel said that the Governor recognizes that education, economic development and workforce development are all connected and has chosen Marybeth Campbell to pull it all together. Joe said that only Massachusetts appointed one person to coordinate the role of the three entities. At the next meeting, he will be reporting on what he has heard from governors in other states as well as key staff from the house and senate on initiatives and directives at an upcoming National Association of Workforce Board Chairs conference which Joe chairs. He said we will continue our efforts to help employers for workers and also help mature workers.

**4. Approval of Minutes of October 31, 2012**

Joe then asked for a motion on the minutes of the October 31, 2012 annual board meeting.

**Motion by George Noel to approve the minutes of the October 31, 2012 annual meeting as submitted and Cal Williams seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.**

**5. Reports of Committee Chairs**

* ***Planning Committee***

Planning Committee Chair Peter Matthews said that he would highlight some of the information found in the Second Quarter Report that is in the meeting packets and then provide an overview of some of the corresponding decisions and topics dealt with by the Planning Committee over the last quarter.

The second quarter report shows that though only six months into the fiscal year, we are already at 81% of plan in the number of job seekers served. The 11,682 number reflects individual ValleyWorks Career Center members who have been physically present at either our Lawrence or Haverhill sites. The actual number of visits at those two sites totals 27,174 for the six month period. That number represents more than 1,000 client visits per week or staff seeing more than 200 people per day. Because of our regional demographics, our career center sees more people face-to-face than any other regional career center in the State. There is little sign that the need for unemployment services is slowing in our area.

Peter then said that the Commonwealth wants to eliminate face-to-face services to most clients and replace them with services over the internet and phone. We think that the State is not ready to implement that change and the State has so far agreed to delay it. All of us should know that we in this region face unique language barriers and that most of the people coming in for face-to-face services at our center speak Spanish. He said that more must be done to prepare these and other clients for the proposed change. This region has, for example, volunteered to air videos in our wait rooms, on cable TV and on our web sites in order to explain how to use the new internet and phone based systems. Unless there is clear and readily available information to help transition clients from the current to the new electronic system, our staff will be spending an inordinate amount of time fielding related questions. Peter continued stating that if one considers that the transition to the new system is a cost-saving measure that will simultaneously reduce the number of face to face service staff, one can imagine the difficulties that our remaining staff will face. As stated before, we must find new ways of sensibly doing more with less in orderly, well-reasoned and systematic ways.

In order to reduce our bureaucratic workload, during this past quarter the Planning Committee passed a motion that will permit our staff to use high school records to determine whether low income in-school students are eligible for our services. Previously, our staff needed to test students to determine whether he or she was performing below grade level. We have now changed this so that any low-income youth whose school transcript indicates a GPA below 2.0 is eligible for our services. More importantly, this change illustrates our new commitment to working with and reinforcing public school systems. Their resources are much greater than ours and we must find ways to multiply the effects of our efforts with their resources.

Returning to our adult services, we should recognize that our inordinately large face-to-face client numbers are probably already impacting our performance numbers. Please note that though, at 60%, we are ahead of plan on our overall entered employment numbers, our WIA adult actual entered employment number is low. In this region, about 40% of enrolled WIA adults have language or literacy barriers and, after recent budget cuts, we may not have enough Spanish language staff to help them. Also, Peter said that employed clients in the adult category are now earning about a dollar less per hour than they did in the past.

Although our Dislocated Worker entered employment percentage rate is higher than planned, it’s based on a much lower than expected number of actual client exits from our system. Peter said that newly employed dislocated workers are now earning about $3.60 an hour less than they did in the past.

In many ways, we are still working our way out of the Great Recession. We have not returned to pre-recession employment or wage levels. Our leaders recognize this and both President Obama and Governor Patrick have highlighted manufacturing as a key to grow our economy and improve our economic situation. It’s clear that if our manufacturers are globally competitive, we sell more to others and our balance of trade improves. If our economy and worker earnings grow because of increased manufacturing, our tax base increases and the Federal deficit goes down. In light of this, during the past quarter the Planning Committee encouraged staff to pursue an advanced manufacturing worker training grant. Long before October 2012, when we first discussed a then just released Workforce Competiveness Trust Fund RFP, the MVWIB had gone on record identifying advanced manufacturing training and development as one of our three key focus areas. Advanced manufacturing was identified as such in our High Performing WIB submission which was then approved and certified by the Commonwealth. We are a High Performing WIB that identified advanced manufacturing training as one of our three key workforce development areas over three years ago. More recently, MVWIB became a charter member of the Northeast Massachusetts Advanced Manufacturing Consortium over six month ago. The Consortium includes three other NE MA WIBs, three community colleges including NECC, many career centers and vocational high schools, one or two trade associations, and many manufacturers.

For unknown reasons, the WCTF RFP’s issuing authority put a $450K cap on a single, Consortium-wide submission. After much negotiation, the Consortium agreed to have the North Shore WIB, submit a $450K proposal. If fully funded at that level, $350K of the $450K grant will come from NE Massachusetts Region 4 which has a $500K total grant cap. Peter noted that our Consortium also includes Metro North, which is out of North East Region 4 so, along with the $450,000 budget, an alternative $600,000 budget was submitted to account for the scope of our efforts.

Peter then reported that there is another, competing proposal from this region that also submitted a $350,000 proposal. They are not happy that the MVWIB was unwilling to support their submission at the level they sought but because the Planning Committee considers growing manufacturing critical to our region, State and Country, we support the decision not to support the competing proposal at the $350,000 level they requested.

In light of this, last week we passed the two following motions.

*“The MVWIB Planning Committee fully supports the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium’s alternative $600,000 Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund budget submitted to Commonwealth Corporation by the Northshore WIB on January 8, 2013. The proposal was submitted by the North Shore WIB on behalf of the Merrimack Valley, Greater Lowell and Metro North WIBs and on behalf of the other members of the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium. We request that this proposal be given top priority for funding at the $600,000 level in the Northeast region”.*

*“Should additional funds be available to the region beyond those requested above, the additional funds should be prioritized for programs designed to prepare trainees for employment in occupations that provide clear career ladders and opportunities for ongoing advancement and increased earnings”.*

In closing Peter said that the Planning Committee thinks that our workforce development system should define itself as an entity that wants to help grow opportunity for both employers and workers. It and economic development entities must work side by side to help grow our economy so that all may ultimately benefit and the recession be put behind us. If our system instead sees itself as a social service entity directly involved in helping resolve a myriad of social, educational and individual ills, it will do very little effectively or well. In these times of high unemployment, we should be doing more workforce and economic development and less of everything else.

Susan Jepson commented on the good work that ValleyWorks Career Center and that education youth is critical but asked that we not forget the mature worker, some who also have language and literacy barriers to employment.

Dr. Lane Glenn addressed the Partners in Progress a primarily each college’s unique resources and not duplicating whether it be specific training, non credit or credit courses created for emerging workforce needs. He also mentioned the College of Older Learners which is paying attention to those who seek lifelong learning.

Nancy Tariot said that many non-older workers have no high school diploma and there is a huge wait list for ABE. She said that she feels that a basic literacy policy that doesn’t allow them to participate is counterproductive.

* ***Youth Council***

Youth Council Chair Cal Williams said that last quarter, the youth council was busy reviewing and analyzing the results of our 2012 Youth Summer Job Employer survey. Cal said you may remember, our summer youth employment program focuses on connecting low-income youth residents of Lawrence, Haverhill and Methuen to State-subsidized summer jobs. Available funds only allow about a third of youth applicants to participate. Many more youth want to take part in the program than YouthWorks funding allows. Due to lack of funding we were also unable to fill all available worksite requests from employers.

Our survey’s 12 questions assessed employers experience with last summer’s YouthWorks 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.

Cal reported that out of the 60 surveys mailed to participating employers, 25 employers took the time to provide us with their feedback. Their feedback also informed us about the most important job skills they were able to impart to their youth workers during the summer. Non-Profit employers made up sixty percent (60%) of the surveyed employers. Employers from the public sector represent sixteen percent (16%) and government agencies twelve percent (12%) of the sample. For-profit employers are only twelve percent (12%) of the sample.

Cal continued stating that all employers indicated their organization’s main purpose. Almost a quarter of the responding employers twenty four percent (24%) provide human services. Employers providing either child care or camp counseling and education each comprised sixteen percent (16%) of this sector. Only eight percent (8%) where from the Information Technology, Manufacturing, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. These numbers indicate that that we must redouble our efforts to partner with our local manufacturing and STEM related companies. More youth need to be exposed to STEM and manufacturing related jobs and we hope to encourage more of these employers to participate in our program next summer.

We hope that more youth will learn about these fields and that, once they know about the opportunities that they offer, they will be inspired to stay in school and study to pursue well paying jobs and careers in Manufacturing and STEM. A youth Amp-it-Up! Program flier is included in your MVWIB quarterly meeting folder.

According to the survey results ninety-two percent (92%) of employers h*ave employed youth in the past* and seventy one percent (71%) feel more comfortable hiring youth through an organized program like ours. One hundred percent (100%) of the employers stated that they will try to participate in the YouthWorks program again and will encourage other employers to take part in YouthWorks. Existing employer participants’ desire to continue participating is likely to impact our desire to have more manufacturing and STEM employer involvement. For many of the youth, this was their first job and potential career experience. It was the first time they were exposed to the world-of-work and the first time they had a chance to assess their job skills andstart to plan ways to prepare for jobs and careers that capture their interest.

Thirty percent (30%) of the employers assisted youth in the developing of their teamwork skills, twenty one percent (21%) taught youth how to act at work, and seventeen percent (17%) guided youth on the importance of accepting supervision. Another work related skill passed on to the youth was taking initiative with sixteen percent (16%). Only four percent (4%) of the employers talked to the youth about the importance of a career.

Cal said that for our participating employers the greatest benefit of employing a youth was the contribution to youth development and the community in addition to the additional support that the youth provided their company or organization. On the other hand, twenty percent (20%) of the employers stated that the *greatest challenge of employing a youth* was keeping the youth motivated, sixteen percent (16%) stated that the greatest challenge was keeping the youth on track, and twelve percent (12%) said that it was not having enough time to provide the youth with additional training.

**Here are a few comments from participating employer**

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| * This is a great program. I enjoy watching the young workers develop a sense of accomplishment, self confidence, and real life work skills. * Excellent Program! We have had 3 youth in our office over the last 3 years. Teaching them work skills has been so fulfilling! * Thank you for the opportunity! I wish it could extend all the way into September to the week after our event. I'd like to request 2-4 youth for the same project next Summer! * We were blessed this year. We had a great group of teens. Had nothing but good things to say about them. * I am pleased on how the ValleyWorks staff runs the program and works closely with youth and employers. * The student sent this summer was a natural. She loved our residents, connected with them and showed maturity some people never reach. This year's student was fabulous; last year’s match was not good. Recommend further knowledge of what positions encompasses before assigning students. * This year the program was great as usual. I think the YouthWorks supervisor should have visited the site more than once for evaluation. This is a wonderful program and I still have 2 youth that I hired after the program. One for several years. * I think the YouthWorks staff did a great job in preparing youth for summer employment and in identifying youth for our available positions all of our youth did an exceptional job! |

Overall, employers were pleased with the program and will encourage other employers to participate. In addition, they are willing to hire youth, should they have additional funds.

Cal said that we must continue to work with our employers on a year-round basis in order to identify employers’ needs and assist our youth to develop job skills that meet those needs. Cal then said that he was asking private sector employers for their support by considering becoming a worksite this coming Summer and by talking to other private sector employers about our program. He said that he hopes you will find the report useful as we continue looking for ways to improve inner city youth’s life chances by strengthening their exposure to economic opportunity and good paying jobs

**6. Presentation: Richard M. Freeland, Commissioner of Higher Education**

Joseph Bevilacqua then introduced Commissioner Freeland who has spent his life in education. He is a former President of Northeastern University and recognizes the importance of work/study. Joe said that the Commissioner spoke before the Economic Development Council which Joe chairs and agreed to address the board today.

Commissioner Freeland said that he is a man with a mission. That mission is promoting the importance of public higher education to Massachusetts businesses. He welcomes the opportunity to speak to employer organizations and WIBs as partnership is one of the keys to continuing to improve public higher education. He then said that he would show a brief video and acknowledged the technical school superintendents, Superintendent Scully and especially NECC President Dr. Lane Glenn who he said is deeply committed to the connection between higher education and the jobs of tomorrow.

Commissioner Freeland said that two-thirds of high school graduates enroll in public higher education and 60% attain a college degree. In 1973 28% of U.S. Jobs required some college. In 2018, 63% will require some college education and Massachusetts will lead the nation with 70% of jobs requiring some college.

He noted that the Time to Lead video quotes Governor Deval Patrick as saying that “there is a knowledge explosion in the global economy, so we need all of Massachusetts educational assets firing on all cylinders.” On the video, a UMass/Dartmouth marketing student said that her Dad spent his career in a factory and she didn’t want to lose a job due to not having a college degree.

The Commissioner said that we sometimes spend more on prisons than higher education. Governor Patrick says that we need to invest in growth and step up. We need to be national leaders and eliminate opportunity disparities by providing equal support and access to students. We want excellence in public education. He stated New Bedford has had a long, slow decline as a result of cross century changes to the economy. Now many of it companies can’t get skilled workers to fill jobs in the new economy. They need education.

The Commissioner said that in the Governor’s State of the State speech he focused on his legacy and its two priorities: transportation and education. The proposed FY14 investments include $152m for excellence and affordability in public higher education through MASSGrant Program funding increases, Completion Incentive Grant increases, Performance funding formulas, and more state dollars to lessen student debt burden.

Commissioner Freeland spoke about closing achievement gaps, workforce alignment, and preparing citizens for the new world economy. Massachusetts is above the national average in college completion but not a national leader in public higher education. We are also under-producing in the high need fields of STEM, Health Care, and Business.

Bob Westcott mentioned the focus on more money to help achieve these goals but asked if there are public policies that are counterproductive to what you want to do. The Commissioner said that he feels that it is an issue of priorities rather than of statutory issues and also noted that we do have lots of antiquated regulations. He cited the example that public funds cannot be used for night classes which the Commonwealth is working to change. Bob said that if we are going to look to put funds into higher education perhaps we may not need that new train. George Noel asked, what are the barriers to college completion? The Commissioner then said that students are not ready for college and need remediation. We need to remove the barriers for seamless credit transfers and support high school completion incentives.

The bottom line is unless we invest in higher education, the future of Massachusetts is in jeopardy. The achievement gaps need to be looked at in every aspect of education from K-12. The Commissioner also said that we need employer voices to help them make choices on priorities.

Bob Ingala spoke about the challenges and a loan program his company, the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, offers employees for advanced degrees. Once completed, after an agreed upon timeframe, the loan is forgiven. The Commissioner said that is a great program that strengthens the workforce. Mike Munday also spoke about his difficulty in getting qualified workers. Joe Bevilacqua said the concerns in the Merrimack Valley are the same as the state.

Commissioner Freeland said that a stronger partnership with the Vocational schools and Community Colleges is critical to preparing workers. Superintendent Lavoie said he would like to commend higher education for recognizing the vocational schools partnering for better alignment for students and said that Dr. Lane Glenn of NECC has great vision.

The Commissioner also provided a booklet entitled ‘Time to Lead’ to all attendees. Joe thanked the Commissioner and then called on Rafael for his report.

**7. Report of Executive Director**

Rafael Abislaiman said that would like to second the Commissioner’s statements about the efforts to quantify education outcomes and prioritize funding that most effectively gives access to students who will use public support well. Rafael said that we also need to prioritize our programming under WIA. WIA funds should focus on workforce development and not on academic remediation. We should be helping people succeed in the new world economy and not how to master junior high school math.

He asked whether we should we be working with the hardest cases to get them into entry level jobs or instead use resources to build middle skills for those already on the first rung? Rafael said that the children of low-income Asians do well in the public schools - perhaps because less money is focused on their neediest to serve. He also asked if we were going to extend remediation efforts not only at the high school and community college levels but also at the four year college level.

He said that during this recession he feels that our money is best spent on developing middle skills. Our Career Center clients are 30% Hispanics and many have language and literacy barriers. But there are also many low income Hispanics who could be more quickly helped to the next rung of the job ladder. Who of these two groups will promptly pay more taxes? Rafael then said that he asks for patience as we try to work to address these difficult issues.

George Noel then said he would like to comment. It is time to get behind the efforts of the governor and step up to the plate to address workers not having the skills employers need. He then mentioned employers getting to know Ken Messina who is working to coordinate business and worker placements through the Commonwealth’s Rapid Response program. Joe Bevilacqua said that he would like to commend ValleyWorks Career Center for the work they do and said that the people we need to work in our industries need to be trained. He thanked Commissioner Freeland and Mayor Kezer for their comments and for being part of economic solutions.

Francisco Brea from the AFL/CIO was recognized and mentioned that he has been coming for some time as a member of the public. He asked if he could contribute and be part of the discussion. Joe Bevilacqua said that all he needed to do was raise his hand to be recognized. Francisco then said that he wanted to concur with George Noel’s remarks regarding engagement and supporting the Governor’s efforts. Joe then said that at the next meeting we would have someone from the Mass Office of Economic or Business Development to report on manufacturing.

**8. Adjournment**

**Having no further business Cal Williams made a motion to adjourn and George Noel seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Recorder