

**Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School**

**115 Amesbury Line Road**

**Haverhill, MA 01830**

**QUARTERLY MEETING**

**Minutes**

**Tuesday, April 30, 2013**

**7:30 AM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sven Amirian, Joseph Bevilacqua, Ron Contrado, Supt. William DeRosa, Steve Kfoury, Atty. Robert LeBlanc, Supt. John Lavoie, Jeff Linehan, Peter Matthews, Michael Munday, George Noel, Ann Ormond, Kevin Page, Donna Rivera, Jeff Sheehy, Nancy Tariot, Cal Williams, Ray Wrobel

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Patrick Blanchette, Brian DePena, Atty. Wendy Estrella, Joe Gangi, Jr., Gary Hale, Susan Jepson, Dr. Lane Glenn, Robert Ingala, Melissa LaChance, Eric Mane, Alberto Nunez, Dahianara Moran-Liranzo, Cindy Phelan, Lester Schindel, Steve Salvo, Evan Silverio, Michael Strem, Stanley Usovicz, Bob Westcott, Len Wilson, Juan Yepez

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Eric Nakajima, Paul Moskevitz, Francisco Brea, David Souza, Arthur Chilingirian

STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Barbara Zeimetz, Mary Kivell, Odanis Hernandez, Susan Almono, Cristy Gomez

# 1. Call to Order

A quorum being present, Joseph Bevilacqua called the meeting to order at 7:50 am and thanked Superintendent DeRosa and Whittier Technical High School for hosting the meeting. He also mentioned that the State Workforce Investment Board would be meeting the next day at Greater Lawrence Technical High School as WIBs are focusing on the great work done by vocational schools.

**2. Welcome**

Joe then introduced Superintendent DeRosa for an update on what is happening at Whittier. Superintendent DeRosa said that next year Whittier will be celebrating its fortieth anniversary and is planning several events to raise funds for scholarships. He also said that they have updated the school logo.

State law requires follow up study on seniors and he said that 70% of their seniors are going on to higher education. Whittier’s dropout rate is .02% which represents only one senior. Supt. DeRosa said that the school is proud of its job placement rate of 92% and that 100% of its students pass MCAS. Whittier has hard working students.

The Superintendent stated that MVWIB meetings indicate how U.S. manufacturing is coming back and Whittier’s Machine Tech Instructor Paul Moskevitz joined him at today’s meeting. Board member Mike Munday has also been a resource to the school. Superintendent DeRosa said that he wants to add additional manufacturing equipment and another instructor but the school is facing a $284,000 reduction in funding. He said that his budget has already been set and that he was pleased that it was passed at last evening’s school council meeting.

Superintendent DeRosa said that enrollment has grown and that Whittier will continue to educate students and strive to meet the demands of employers.

**4. Approval of Minutes of January 23, 2013**

Joe then asked for a motion on the minutes of the January 23, 2013 board meeting.

**Motion by Cal Williams to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2013 meeting as submitted; Mike Munday seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.**

**5. Reports of Committee Chairs**

* ***Planning Committee***

Planning Committee Chair Peter Matthews began the Planning Committee report stating that the report will focus on several significant changes that are on our immediate horizon. Due to the Federal Sequester and Massachusetts’ improving employment rate, the MVWIB’s regional Workforce Investment Act funding is currently scheduled to be reduced by about 20% or about $420,000 this coming fiscal year. If non WIA contracts are cut or not renewed, the actual reduction numbers may turn-out to be greater than 22%. These cuts will begin July 1st. The Sequester began earlier but the Department of Labor and the Commonwealth decided to delay budget adjustments till the new fiscal year. Consequently, our first quarter cuts may be over 55%. The front loaded first quarter cuts mean that the following three quarters will see considerably smaller cuts that will average out to about 20%.

We are considering a variety of options to deal with the funding reductions. First, our footprint in Haverhill is likely to become much smaller. We currently spend almost $250,000 per year in Haverhill space costs. We will try to cut that down by about 80 to 90 per cent. If the City of Haverhill cannot provide free or low cost space for a Haverhill site, we plan to RFP for rental space that will cost no more than $2,500 per month. The lease at our current site is up in October but we may execute this plan before then. We also plan to reduce Haverhill staffing by about two thirds from the current 18 or so staff members to about 6 employees.

Apart from the high cost, Haverhill space and staffing cuts are planned because the Commonwealth is planning to conduct more unemployment services either by phone or on-line. The people we serve in Haverhill are better positioned to deal with those system changes. Many more of our Lawrence-served customers need our face-to-face services. Residents on the eastern side of our WIB region will need to drive more to reach a fully manned career center but about 60% of our current customers reside in either Lawrence, Methuen or Haverhill and about seventy percent of our customers live in these and the communities that abut them.

Peter said that we will also need to furlough and lay-off some Union and non-Union staff. The Career Center Director and Ralph, our MVWIB Director acting as Title I Administrator, are currently speaking to the Union about these issues. The Union Representatives currently prefer a furlough. Because we don’t know when the sequester cuts will end, there are business and individual advantages and disadvantages to either the lay-off or furlough option. Furloughs may ultimately reduce employee’s unemployment insurance payments and too many furloughs may interfere with service delivery.

Union staff are slated to receive unplanned COLAs at the start of FY 2014 and FY 2015. Although they are only 2.5% each, they impact our budgets. Management is trying to persuade the Union to negotiate a new contract that will encompass these COLAs in the context of revised policies. We have asked them to work with us on defining what constitutes a “qualified” employee able to bump into another position. The last union contract seems to give the Career Center discretion in determining who is qualified but we would like to be able to take these actions in cooperation with the Union.

About a year ago, we asked the City of Lawrence to consider RFPing the Career Center. This may also be back on the table. Chili and his staff have done an excellent job but we may need to find new ways to do more with a lot less.

Joe said that we all know that we are facing budget cuts but it is difficult to see how we are to deal with 14,000 – 15,000 people frequently visiting our career centers, the provision of training and helping underemployed find a career ladder when we have fewer and fewer dollars. But the reality is that we are never going back to past year funding levels.

* ***Youth Council***

Youth Council Chair Cal Williams said that we continue to work with designated high school staff to identify students who need career development services and job readiness skills training. Over the last quarter, our Connecting Activities staff served already enrolled students by providing career awareness and job readiness skills information and by helping enrolled students be better able to recognize the importance of academic work to the development of skills that employers seek when hiring new employees. Cal also said that we outreach and partner with schools to provide themwith school-to-career event planning, labor market information, and direct connections to the local business communities. School-to-career program support and assistance includes, but is not limited to the following: career fair event planning, coordination for National Job Shadow Day, printed/online resources (career interest inventories, labor market information, employment data, etc), student employment information, work and learning workshops, and Massachusetts Work-based Learning Plan training and teacher consultation.

Cal reported that a National Job Shadow Day was held in March. He said that we worked together with several schools in a large team effort that made the day work out well! Students were able to learn firsthand about potential careers from front line workers in different career fields. This year’s job shadow day was a rewarding experience for the staff, students, and employers who participated.

Participating students needed to more clearly see the connection between school, careers, and the work word. Staff meets with students each week to teach them about career awareness, career exploration, and the foundation skills that are required by all jobs. Job Shadow Day provided these students with the opportunity to intertwine all these components by experiencing the world of work.

Job Shadow Day made such an impact on these youth that for many of them it was the first time they thought about life after high school and the possibility of pursuing a career that will lead to self-sufficiency. Job Shadow Day helped students realize that a career after high school is within their reach. A total of 38 students participated in National Job Shadow Day – 10 students from Lawrence High School Main Campus, 11 Students from Lawrence High School Learning Center, and 17 students from Haverhill High School. A total of 17 employers from the Lawrence Area and 12 from the Haverhill Area hosted the students this year.

In our on-going effort to build a stronger working relationship with the Greater Lawrence Technical School and Haverhill High School, MVWIB and VWCC staff met to talk about the services and resources that allow us to connect the classroom learning with work based learning activities in order to assist students with their career and employment needs.

The DYS Bridging the Opportunity Gap has exceeded program expectations. Due to the success of the BOG Program, a modification request for additional funding to allow us to continue to provide quality services to DYS most in need youth was submitted and approved by Commonwealth Corporation. The program will continue to provide DYS committed youth with the resources to better prepare them for the workplace. The biggest BOG program success story this quarter was having 8 of the youth attend the Customer Service Certificate training at Lare training on 2/19/13 and 2/20/13. Of the 8 who attended, 7 passed the exam and received their National Certification. The 1 youth that did not pass is going to be allowed to repeat this training and take the exam.

The Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB) is one of ten Mass Development grant recipients selected to promote advanced manufacturing as an attractive career path for future Commonwealth jobseekers. The selected “Amp It Up” campaign is designed to inform area youth, their families, and educators about jobs in the advanced manufacturing sector. Over half of the Valley’s manufacturing employees will soon be retiring and vacancies in advanced manufacturing will be on the rise. Precision Manufacturing firms now report that they urgently need trained CNC machinists; and electro-mechanical firms seek workers skilled in assembly.

The “Amp it Up!” Program will acquaint local students with these jobs and the new face of advanced manufacturing in the Merrimack Valley. To kick off the “Amp It Up” campaign the MVWIB Youth Council conducted a poster contest that challenged high school students in Lawrence, Methuen and Haverhill to create signs that will be used in ***“Amp it Up!”***  marketing efforts. Nicholas D’Avolio from Methuen High School was the contest winner and Cassandra Rocheleau and Annie Machado from the Greater Lawrence Technical School won 2nd and 3rd Place. Over the next few months “Amp It Up” will offer activities for students, parents and educators in Lawrence, Methuen, and Haverhill High schools.

The Summer YouthWorks Program application narrative was submitted to Commonwealth Corporation on Friday April 5, 2013. The application/contracting process will proceed pending funding. The Summer YouthWorks Employment Application was released on Wednesday April 3, 2013. Employment placements will be awarded on a lottery basis. The deadline for receipt of completed applications is Friday May 10, 2013. Once found eligible, youth will be able to participate in the lottery. Lottery drawing will take place on Friday May 17, 2013.

Cal then asked board members for their support by becoming a youth worksite this coming summer and by talking to other private sector employers about our program. He said that if businesses would like to become a worksite, please contact VWCC Business Services Representative, Susan Ingham, at 978-722-7048 and to let the MVWIB know.

* ***Nominating Committee***

Ann Ormond, Nominating Committee Chair, reported that Julie Gadziala has closed her business and left the board. She thanked Julie for her service and said that we have three new board members coming aboard. They are Sven Amirian, President/CEO of the Haverhill Chamber of Commerce, Melissa LaChance, Executive Director of the Amesbury Chamber of Commerce, and John Sarro, Executive Director of Pentucket Medical. She said that she is pleased to welcome her chamber colleagues as well as Mr. Sarro to the board.

Joe Bevilacqua said that he is pleased with our regional representation as we are all part of one economy and also mentioned that is why we hold our board meetings in different locations throughout the region.

**6. Presentation: Eric Nakajima, Mass Assistant Secretary for Innovation and Policy**

Joseph Bevilacqua said that based on past discussions on the importance of manufacturing to this region, he’s invited someone who can tell us what is happening at the state level. Joe then introduced Eric Nakajima, Assistant Secretary for Innovation and Policy – Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, and thanked him for coming to address the board.

Mr. Nakajima began his remarks stating that he is excited to talk about manufacturing and about being invited by Joe who is a statewide leader providing counsel and leadership to many organizations. He also recognized George Noel and Mike Munday who he said are great sources of advice on focusing resources.

Mr. Nakajima said that it is awkward to talk about a new initiative when existing programs have so much stress related to funding cuts. He said that three years ago the Governor decided to look at the current status of manufacturing in the state. When we think of the financial and housing bubble that occurred at that time, it is hard to look back and remember where we were then.

The Governor felt that it was time to listen and act on behalf of Massachusetts manufacturing companies. To better understand their priorities, he launched the Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative (AMC). Eric mentioned that it is true that many families who experienced pain when manufacturing jobs were lost are no longer pursuing, nor encouraging their children to pursue, manufacturing careers. The AMC would like to change that.

Mr. Nakajima said that there is a good report from Barry Blueston of Northeastern University that has hard data on manufacturing in Massachusetts. It outlines how manufacturers are buying new equipment, seeking new markets, and looking for new workers to replace a significant number of employees who will soon be retiring. It is estimated that there will be 100,000 new openings over the next ten years. That can be felt most acutely here in the Northeast so Community Colleges, Vocational Schools and WIBs are looking at how to deal at the expense of training equipment and qualified instructors to teach the manufacturing skill set. Regional organizations in partnership with manufacturers are needed to refine manufacturing-related curriculums. He said that we need all hands on deck. WIBSs and partners from a variety of institutions are critical to the front line work that’s needed to ensure that Massachusetts is a competitive manufacturing center.

Mr. Nakajima said that the Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative is a body dedicated to developing a manufacturing strategy. The Under-Secretary stated that he is the government chair but the voice of the manufacturing industry is paramount and they are represented in the collaborative. Workforce development and education are organizing the state agenda.

He said that the “Amp It Up Program” is one of their first initiatives to get the word out on manufacturing careers. He also mentioned the jobs bill of $5m for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF) is another way of making manufacturing a priority sector. We are also working to optimize the Workforce Trust Fund to make it more useful to manufacturers.

Mr. Nakajima continued stating that the Governor is putting money where his mouth is. He has proposed $19m for an Advanced Manufacturing Future Fund which has made it through the House. We are hopeful that it will make it through the Senate. There is also $750,000 for a new workers program in the western part of the state. We are also looking at additional resources for partnerships. The last step is a pipeline that will help with tuition for 100-150 workers. If that is restored to the budget then we will be able to do that too. This is part of an effective and strategic approach to support manufacturing. We don’t want to duplicate efforts and Secretary Bialecki’s number one priority is regional partnerships in which employers are as engaged as possible. The future of our economy and increasing employment and business opportunities for future generations is our mutual obligation.

He also said that there are great opportunities in technology, health care, aeronautics, etc. We need to better connect to leverage resources. Mass Development is working to improve networking for procuring products. In an effort to engage employers there is a day-long summit planned at Gillette Stadium on June 25th. It will focus on small and medium size companies. There will be peer workshops around solving problems and information on workforce training. Large companies will also be invited as the smaller companies are part of their supply chain.

Mr. Nakajima concluded his remarks by stating that in spite of all the challenges we are facing we need to seize the opportunity to build a strong foundation for manufacturing.

Joe Bevilacqua said that what the Governor has done is bring his cabinet Secretaries together. Mike Munday said this is a lot of great information and the initiative has a lot of traction. Eric agreed that they are trying to align departments and tightly integrate them so if a manufacturer needs assistance there is no wrong door.

Jeff Linehan said it is good that the state is looking at manufacturing but he said that it is expensive to do business in Massachusetts with high health, housing and energy costs. Jeff said we need to look at all the components as we are not all large manufacturers such as GE or Raytheon who can often pass on costs.

Erick Nakajima then said that the cost of doing business is one of the five priorities we are focusing on. Regional reform is an effort the Governor is strongly behind. The Mass Clean Energy Center is working on ideas to help small and medium companies. He said that these are significant concerns and major issues and he said that he would make himself available for further discussion if anyone wanted to contact him.

**7. Report of Executive Director**

Rafael Abislaiman said that the MVWIB is facing about a 22% funding cut. He is not clear on how State-level funders will respond. He cited an example where MVWIB applied for funding in partnership with Raytheon and Northern Essex Community College a couple of years ago. The partnership was created to train low-income young people for manufacturing electronic assembly jobs but it was not funded. A wait staff and day care assistant training proposal for homeless mothers with children was funded instead.

In this region, the board has made the decision to train people who will more quickly contribute back to the tax base rather than dedicate job training dollars to those who need long term help. This board emphasizes training low-income people who have shorter term training needs. The MVWIB decided to focus youth training on those with high school diplomas or GEDs and adult training on people who have at least a 7.9 grade or higher education level rather than spend more on educational remediation for people at lower levels. We do not want to write anyone off but some problems are better addressed by funds that aren’t intended to help employers with their work force.

Rafael stated that recently we got good news from one part of the State - a north east manufacturing partnership proposal was funded. But another part of the State has so far not come forward with other money that was counted on to implement the proposal. We’re facing what we hope to be a short-term dilemma. We do not now know how to implement the program because almost all of its funding is for training at community colleges and vocational schools and very little is left to cover the staff cost of the people who put it together and who will help make it happen. He said that he will continue to keep the board abreast of any developments.

Rafael then referred to a handout included in the meeting packets. He said that first quarter 2014 funding from July through September stands at about 10% and not 25%. We’ll have a lot less money during the first quarter. This region received the third largest annual percentage cut in the State. The cut is carried out via a formula that has us with better unemployment numbers than other State regions.

Also, in the Third Quarter Report included in the meeting packets, Rafael explained that Chili and his staff already exceed some of the planned service numbers for the entire year. They are at 140% of the number of unemployed planned for service. Ralph said that the funding cuts will oblige us to cut back our services.

We are trying to make the right decisions and are looking at smaller space for Haverhill and possibly, Lawrence. We are also looking at staffing cuts, and we may RFP the career center even though Chili and staff are doing an admirable job.

Chili said that over the last ten years our highest number served was 15,000. This year we are already at over 16,000 when our goal was 14,500. Chili said that his concern is not just the federal cuts but state cuts as well. He said that he hasn’t filled some positions and some companies are experiencing closings so we will try to apply for other National Emergency Grants (NEGs). Chili also said that there is also a DYS grant coming up but this is the worst budget he has seen in his thirty five years. He also said that sequestration is not just for today but for ten years.

As of July 1st UI staff will move to a new state online system. Our primary clientele is Latino with limited English and low computer skills. The new UI system was tested last year and our IT person couldn’t get through it. Though the State has made some improvements, many of our clients are bound to have problems with it. Currently there are 6 UI staff and he doesn’t know how many the State will fund during the transition. It will make things very difficult in July for the Center as clients will still be coming in and we won’t be able to provide services.

The board chairman said that we are all aware of budget cuts coming and not being restored but there are target communities where UI is not where it should be. He said just visit one of the ValleyWorks Career Centers and see the numbers of people in need of services.

Rafael said that sequestration is incremental. If Congress doesn’t come to an agreement, additional, automatic, cuts will go into effect for the next ten years. He also mentioned that devastating cuts in defense could be felt by many area manufacturers and that will impact regional manufacturing, at least in the short term.

George Noel, Deputy Director of the Department of Industrial Accidents spoke about a new round of safety grants that will allocate up to $25,000 to drive down worker compensation and urged employers to apply.

**8. Adjournment**

**Having no further business Sven Armirian made a motion to adjourn and Mike Munday seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Recorder