



# **YOUTH COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES**

**Wednesday, March 11, 2015  
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board  
439 South Union – Suite 102  
Lawrence, MA 01843**

### **Youth Council MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Michael Bevilacqua, April Lyskowsky, Steve Noroian, Linda Piergeorge, Tom Raiche, Lisa Remington, Michael Strem, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

### **MVWIB Youth Council MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Francisco Brea, Irene Chalek, Janet Allison, Beverly DeSalvo, Ed Fitzgerald, Brad Howell, Superintendent John Lavoie, Wilberto Mejias, Maria Miles, Sonia Morales, Donna Rivera, Ed Warnshuis

### **MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:**

Cristy Gomez, Mary Kivell

**OTHERS:** Howard Allen, Dale Hollingshead, Wally DeGuglielmo, Elsa Martinez-Pimentel

### **I. Call to Order and Introductions**

A quorum being present, Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:45 a.m. and introductions were made around the table.

### **II. Approval of January 14, 2015 Minutes**

Youth Council Chairman Cal Williams called for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2015 meeting.

**Motion by Ellen Weinhold, seconded by Francisco Brea, to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2015 Youth Council minutes as submitted.  
Motion passed.**

### **III. Youth Program Update**

Youth Programs Director Cristy Gomez presented the Youth Program Update. She said that Connecting Activities .

Cal Williams then asked for introductions around the table.

**IV. Guest Speaker – Wally DeGuglielmo, Director of Strategic Partnerships uAspire (formerly ACCESS)**

Cal Williams then called on Dennis McCarthy, Director of Development at the Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence. Mr. McCarthy referenced the North of Boston Business Publication on page 4 with a photo of Rafael and an article on the WIB quoting Rafael stating that we may be in better shape than the rest of the country but there is still need here.

Dennis said that the Boys and Girls Club of Lawrence was started by local business merchants in 1891 to help young boys grow intellectually and develop character. Girls were allowed to attend beginning in 1992. They operate under three pillars, Health and Lifestyle; Academic Success; and Character and Leadership. Ninety Five percent of funding is private with some state and United Way funds. Most youth served are from 7 –17 and come from Lawrence, Methuen, Andover, and North Andover. There are also some donors' kids from the suburbs. The focus is on education. Even playing basketball is contingent on effort in education and doing homework. We are partnering with LPS on an After School program. They would like us to do more but they can only do what can be accommodated with current staffing and space.

Mr. McCarthy said that every kid is different and we have tutors for every three kids. Tutors are comprised of engineers from Raytheon, high school kids, adults and alumni. He said that they try to instill a healthy lifestyle through nutrition and serve dinner every night to 350 kids who mostly qualify for the LPS free lunch program. Thirty high school volunteers prepare, serve and clean up and we follow school nutrition guidelines. They have 500-600 youth at the Boys and Girls Club every day. They teach them about the dangers of drugs, alcohol, gangs and teen pregnancy through peer to peer and guest speakers. They have a Torch Club that teaches leadership and volunteering and the high school youth have a Keystone Club which goes out into the community.

Dennis said that the club is a second home where kids feel safe and adults care about them. Every kid matters and some need us more than others. They are required to bring in a report card from school that ranks behavior, homework, and effort. Parents sign on for this partnership with the school. Youth can't play on a team or come to a dance club if they get a bad report and have to earn reinstatement. This teaches them accountability for their behavior. This is not entitlement but opportunity. He explained that they have a Wall of Fame with former members who have become successful as examples of what they can accomplish.

Dennis continued stating that Massachusetts and the National Boys & Girls Clubs have a Youth of the Year Award and they have 2 national and 2 Massachusetts as well as 2 runners up. It costs participants \$30 per year to join but no kid is turned away. It

costs \$873 per year per kid with a total budget of \$2.8m per year. Not receiving government dollars allows us to have a lot of rules. For example, for a serious infraction there is a three day suspension and they must bring in a parent or guardian. He referenced their newsletter that addresses the successful Lawrence turn around and longer school day.

Rafael said that Lawrence is very lucky to have the Boys and Girls Club and asked if youth must be in school. Dennis said that they must be in school to participate. Cal asked about building a pipeline and Dennis said that they have partnerships with Raytheon and the Patriots and also speakers on different professions and an Assistant Director who assists with college applications and guidance. There is no transportation and by 8:30 pm everyone is gone.

Francisco Brea said that it is a wonderful opportunity for youth and his son and granddaughter have participated. Dennis relayed a story of how the boxing program helped him build confidence when he was ten years old and how Steve Kelley demands effort and the kids know they care. He also spoke about the South Lawrence site that serves 60-100 kids on that side of the city and a technology center provided by Intel. He relayed the success story of Steven Tran who won the first place nationwide in a Sony contest by creating a video with special effects and now has been asked to judge and teach others. He was a shy boy when he came to the Boys and Girls Club and is now attending Central Catholic and on the wrestling team. Dennis said he will probably end up working for Sony!

## **VI. Partner's Information/Other Business**

Steve Noroian from DMH spoke about a grant targeting 16-25 young adults with mental health issues who don't succeed. It is in the planning stages and they will be hiring an executive director for this 5 year grant serving Lawrence and Haverhill youth.

Ellen Weinhold from the Methuen Housing Authority spoke about her HUD grant and the numbers being higher than 2014. She also said that Temple Emmanuel was very helpful securing gifts from a wish list for 250 children who got everything on their list. She also said that the Merrimack Valley Golf Club through their Italian Open donated gift cards for turkeys at Market Basket. She said she was going to see about getting gift cards for pork shoulder for Christmas, as that is the traditional meal for most of the recipients. Ellen also said that the Methuen Housing Authority also has a new Director named Bob Cox who started a couple of months ago.

Linda Piergeorge from Mass Rehab informed the council that Executive Director Gary Hale is retiring on February 8<sup>th</sup> and she doesn't know if he will be replaced as the new Governor has put a hiring freeze in place.

April Lyskowsky reported on YouthBuilds recent graduation for cycle 19 and they are gearing up for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of YouthBuild. She also reported that LFDEF, Inc.

recently took on the Safe & Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) and she is now Director of Alternative Youth Development. This new group is 14-24 proven risk males with gang involvement or some serious offense. Rafael said that what April and her staff are doing is courageous. Some of the kids she'll work with were involved in serious crimes. He said that as a member of the Fund and School boards his concern is that any negative publicity from the SSYI could reflect poorly on Family Developments other, very successful youth programs that have been in place for many years. April said that they are doing trauma intervention and job development and are just getting started with this initiative.

Irene Chalek spoke about NECC free 30 week college prep ESOL class with cohorts on STEM and Advanced Manufacturing. Irene said that students have expressed a desire for a cohort in health and business. This model is working well and is free with 6-9 college credits. There are 20 participants per cohort.

Mike Strem said that Strem Chemical, Inc. is a privately owned company and sells some chemicals to international markets in North America and Asia. It is also an ESOP (employee stock owned program) and has expanded the past couple of years building a warehouse for the chemicals that is up to code. Cal Williams also thanked Mr. Strem for sponsoring three summer youth.

Wilberto Mejias from Job Corps said that they have 16 new spots for females and in June will be opening a new center in Manchester, New Hampshire. Rafael mentioned that 70% of the participants at Devens are from Greater Lawrence and are recruited at VWCC.

Tom Raiche said that the AFL/CIO and United Way gave out 5,000 turkeys and baskets. The AFL-CIO is still sponsoring pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs in the trades and is also doing a Job Shadow day in May. The Career Construction Day the end of April has 20 slots designated to GLTS. April Lyskowsky expressed concern that Youth Build would not be able to participate this year due to the reduction in slots and the assigning of them to GLTS. She asked who to contact and Tom said he would get her the information.

Francisco Brea said that the AFL/CIO is involved in education and training through the Workforce Training Fund under Bob Bower. The Mass AFL/CIO had a grant for 13-15 kids to get into construction and early OSHA and state certifications and they are already working. He said that Kraft Foods is having a layoff and rapid response will be going there this evening. He also said that he would like to have the council see their site in Hopkinton or maybe he could bring in pictures.

Dale Hollingshead from GLTS representing Superintendent DeRosa spoke about a new plan to pursue connecting with NECC for early college credits and agreements to earn high school and college credits. John Lavoie would like to see this implemented and it

is in the discussion stages with figuring out the logistics and getting GLTS teachers accredited to teach college courses. There is a model at Mass Bay with an auto program. This would be a way to compete a credential and also earn college credits. He said that this year would be a planning year.

**VII. Adjournment**

**Having no further business Irene Chalek made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Francisco Brea. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Mary Kivell  
Recorder