



# **YOUTH COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES**

**Wednesday, September 9, 2015  
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board  
439 South Union – Suite 102  
Lawrence, MA 01843**

### **Youth Committee MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Howard Allen, Francisco Brea, Irene Chalek, Brad Howell, Linda Piergeorge, Tom Raiche, Lisa Remington, Michael Strem, David Tagliaferri, Ed Warnshuis, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

### **MVWIB Youth Committee MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Michael Bevilacqua, Beverly DeSalvo, Ed Fitzgerald, Superintendent John Lavoie, Wilberto Mejias, Maria Miles, Sonia Morales, Donna Rivera

### **MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:**

Rafael Abislaiman, Cristy Gomez, Mary Kivell

**OTHERS:** Dale Hollingshead for Supt. Lavoie, Jackie Romero

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

A quorum being present, Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m. and introductions were made around the table.

Cal then said that he was moving our guest speaker up on the agenda so he can leave due to a prior commitment.

### **II. Guest Speaker – Mark Kampert, Executive Director, Youth Development Organization**

Cal Williams then called on our guest speaker Mark Kampert, Executive Director of Youth Development Organization (YDO). Mark said that he is not from the Merrimack Valley or Boston but from Pittsburgh. He said that the Youth Development Organization was incorporated in 2003 by one of the churches in the area as a 501©3. Howard Sticklor began as executive director in 2006 with the mission of serving talented, motivated and underserved youth.

YDO has a connection with Phillips Academy. The number of kids grew and Phillips, UMass-Lowell and MIT became partners. They now provide scholarship support for spots in a five-week program with eighteen kids participating this year. There is also a mentoring block where the college students work with younger kids. YDO's focus is always kids.

Mark said that three years ago he met Howard Sticklor and had no intention of joining YDO. But Mark said that after meeting the high school seniors and college freshman still around because of their relationship with YDO in middle school and their willingness to get involved in the program encouraged him to come and work on its sustainability.

In 2013 they hired twenty-four high school and college students who designed a program for sixty-five middle school youth. The program doubled in 2014 and grew again this year. MVWIB support contributed to that growth. He thanked the WIB for the growth of the summer program.

Mark said that there are several different seasonal programs. This year's summer program, which was student led, focused on strengthening kids familiarity with the arts and sciences via hands-on projects. There was a recyclable fashion show. There was also a song writing and recording program with songs placed on iTunes. They have strong science program that participates in a state competition each year and contributed to their Lego robotics championship win.

They also participated in the PEW Engineering Center at UMass-Lowell which was recently closed by the university. Mr. Kampert said that he connected with the executive director of that program and together were able to get \$200,000 in seed money to bring it back under YDO in Lawrence.

He said that they had seasonal courses on things such as Halloween Animatronics, a Mini-Golf Course and Party Lights. He brought a sample of the party lights and how the youth were allowed to take them home. He said that they will have a fall program where they will have three teams to do basic design and manufacturing and come up with a set price to sell them. They try to remain adaptable and keep things interesting.

Mark said that where he sees a niche in the community is with a workforce of grownups who will come back and work and give back to the program that helped them. We want to retain our small organizational structure and leverage the talent of high school and college students who should be paid for their services.

Rafael asked if all the committee members support the WIB working with the YDO and committee members unanimously replied in the affirmative.

Rafael also said that he wanted to be clear that we followed all WIOA mandates for YDO youth participation and they were all low income kids.

Mark then invited committee members to come and observe the YDO programs in action. He also spoke of working to connect with LPS Abbott Academy to offer programming with four MIT Phds on Saturdays.

Mike Strem asked what engineering they are teaching middle school students besides math. Mark said that they are teaching basic parallel circuitry and computer programming. He also said that they have a science club for girls partnering with Phillips Academy and is also looking at Northern Essex and other community colleges to get kids to teach/mentor youth.

### **III. Approval of the June 10, 2015 Minutes**

Youth Committee Chairman Cal Williams called for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2015 meeting.

**Motion by Mike Strem, seconded by Howard Allen, to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2015 Youth Council minutes as submitted. Motion passed.**

### **IV. Summer Programs Update**

Youth Workforce Program Manager Cristy Gomez said that this summer we provided subsidized YouthWorks jobs to 236 income eligible youth from the cities of Lawrence, Haverhill, and Methuen. She said that we received \$569,663.00 to provide subsidized employment opportunities to 261 youth. 244 youth successfully completed 15 hours of Signal Success Work-Readiness Workshops but some left the program before completion. There were over 60 employers who participated.

Rafael noted that the Mayor wants to increase the number of youth employed and hopes that employers will match one of our subsidized youth by hiring one on their own.

Commonwealth Corporation on behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services awarded us \$30,000 for the ValleyWorks BOG Program - Bridging the Opportunity Gap to serve 10 youth this summer. The goal of the grant was to build collaborative partnerships for effective career readiness that provide bridges to employment services for youth in the custody of the Department of Youth Services. A budget modification has been submitted for the amount of \$ 9,400 in order to add additional weeks of work for the Youth and pay overhead costs of staff and administration. Cristy said that there were no incidents and the program went well.

Cristy continued stating that we will be submitting a proposal for the YouthWorks Year-Round program. The application is due to CommCorp September 11, 2015. The period of performance for local contracts is October 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. With the

allocated amount of funding for our region, we will be able to enroll only 29 youth into the programs due to the increase in the minimum wage.

Cristy then spoke about a mural on Essex Street done by YouthWorks Summer Participants assigned to the Essex Art Center. Participants were able to utilize creativity and math to create this beautiful mural.

## **V. WIOA Update**

Rafael said that we are mandated to serve mostly low income individuals except dislocated workers. He said that he was amazed when he saw what the federal guidelines are for low income. Low income is defined as \$6,000 in 1969 money adjusted by the cost price index to today's money. When one does that any individual making about \$45,000 or less in today's money classifies as low income. One then has individuals who earn middle incomes and high incomes. The number of unemployed and low income people influences the federal allocation to the state. But \$40K is rarely heard as the eligibility criteria. Other and entirely different formulas and criteria are used. Rafael mentioned the greater economic growth and job stability of the United States after World War II. He said that we work in a different world now and we need to find ways to help create more opportunities for people born poor.

Cal asked if we have any year round programs for youth and Rafael said we have YouthWorks year round and Connecting Activities. WIOA mandates 20% of funding for In School Youth (ISY) and we may do a group program. As voted by our Planning Committee, Out of School Youth (OSY) must have a high school diploma or HiSet/GED and most get ITAs (Individual Training Accounts).

The reason for the Planning Committee stating that OSY must have their diploma or HiSet to be WIOA Title I eligible is because the schools have so much more money to address educating their students. We as WIA Title I recipients are charged with job training and placement not with remedial education.

Rafael said that ITA programs often have only one or two participants in a class and it is difficult for vendors to pay a teacher. We are looking for programs that teach a variety of job skills because we currently place the majority of our Adult category trainees in CNA training. That may be good because lower level health sector jobs may be less susceptible to automation.

Rafael said that more jobs will be supplanted by automation and robotics in the future. The largest immediate impact may be felt in the Transportation sector.

## **VI. Partner's Information**

- Brad Howell said that Career Resources is working more with youth with disabilities in schools. He said that he would like to throw out what role we may play in increasing the minimum wage slowly. He said that most folks are working two jobs.

Rafael said that Massachusetts has increased the minimum wage to \$9 this year, \$10 next year and \$11 the following year.

- Irene Chalek of Northern Essex Community College said that she has had a very busy summer. They had a program on careers in the food industry with students also taking ESOL. They also visited Hans Kissel in Haverhill. All of the eight participants were offered jobs. Now they are doing orientation for programs and are looking for experienced ESOL instructors. She handed out a job description.
- Howard Allen reported that his first grandchild has started college and he is looking at some STEM issues.
- David Tagliaferri from DMH said that a number of staff took early retirements and some offices are being consolidated. They are working to maintain taking care of their clients and getting folks employed. He said that the difficulty is to manage the work trajectory with the illness cycle. He is pleased to join this committee and welcomes hearing from others.
- Lisa Remington from ValleyWorks said that she has been working with the transition from WIA to WIOA. One thing is the inclusion of poverty zones and teen eligibility for pregnant and parenting teens without other barriers. We are looking at an advanced manufacturing cycle with NAMC. She also mentioned a new tool called Career Ready One on One. The career center will conduct a workshop once a week.
- Ellen Weinhold said that her programs are just gearing up and Linda Piergeorge said that the Lawrence area has a new Executive Director, Katie Sweeney who comes from CLASS. We are a mandated partner in WIOA charged to serve 15% high school kids but there are no clear guidelines. Our Job placement and Employment Service Specialists have developed relationships with companies such as CVS and Home Depot and are looking at Enterprise and Advanced Auto Parts.
- Mike Strem said that he has been conducting business as usual and is building an analytical Lab. He has 70 employees.
- Francisco Brea said that labor is always busy and they have interviewed 10 youth to participate in an apprenticeship program. They are looking for 3 or 4 more youth. He was surprised that the youth didn't know about unions.

## **VII. Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

**Having no further business Howard Allen made a motion to adjourn, seconded by David Tagliaferri. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Mary Kivell  
Recorder