



# **YOUTH COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES**

**Wednesday, October 13, 2010**

**11:30 a.m.**

**Northern Essex Community College Riverwalk Campus**

**360 Merrimack Street, Building 9**

**Lawrence, MA 01843**

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

Irene Chalek, Howard Allen, Janet Allison, Brad Howell, Linda Piergeorge, Heidi Riccio, Barbara Richards, Megan Shea, Cal Williams

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

Kristine Blum, Lisa Coy, Beverly DeSalvo, Melanie Mericle, Ed Fitzgerald, Howard Flagler, Tricia Snow, Michael Strem, Steve Noroian, Vinnie Ouellette, Ed Warnshuis

### **MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:**

Ralph Abislaiman, Mary Kivell, Deborah Andrews, Odanis Hernandez, Betty Kirk, Susan Almono

### **GUESTS PRESENT:**

Arthur Chilingirian, Kathy Howe, Donna Rivera, April Lyskowsky

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

A quorum being present, Youth Council Chairman Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:45 a.m. He asked Irene Chalek, Executive Director of Northern Essex Community College Center for Adult Education Programs and Practitioners, to say a few words.

Ms. Chalek said that she was pleased to be able to host today's meeting. She said that Northern Essex Community College opened this site on September 1<sup>st</sup> and that adult education programs share the space with the college's Workforce Development and Community Education Departments and some business classes with academic and non-credit classes. There was a clamor to add other classes to the building but Irene said they were concerned with filling the classes. Now the classes are overfilled. They have space on the third and fourth floors with 20 classrooms and 5 state of the art computer labs. Irene said that having this space has given the students a sense of empowerment. She also said they welcome

community meetings, especially during the daytime and encouraged folks to contact her if they want to have a meeting in this facility.

Introductions were then made around the table and Cal welcomed Donna Rivera, Executive Director of Merrimack Valley Area Health Education Center, who is looking forward to working and partnering with the Youth Council. He also welcomed April Lyskowsky, Director of Youth Build, who oversees a GED construction training program and is adding a high school diploma track. They are also partnering with post secondary education and internships. Funding for Youth Build formerly came through HUD but now comes through DOL. Youth Build is running a lot of programs. They are looking to add a charter high school in the future with a culinary arts program. Kathy Howe, Director of Night School at Greater Lawrence Technical High School talked about a summer program with youth attaining five separate certifications. All participants passed their certifications, with 9 completing the program.

## **II. Approval of September 8, 2010 Minutes**

Cal then called for a motion on the minutes of the September 8, 2010 meeting.

**Motion by Megan Shea seconded by Howard Allen to approve the minutes of the September 8, 2010 Youth Council meeting as submitted. Motion passed.**

## **III. Review Eligibility Barriers recommended by Youth Council and Approval by Planning Committee**

Cal Williams said that the additional eligibility barriers approved by the Youth Council and Planning Committee were well received at the MVWIB annual meeting last week. The additional eligibility barriers are: 1.) youth resides in a designated poverty area census tract; 2.) youth is part of a non-traditional household; and 3.) youth is a resident of public or subsidized housing.

Cal said that the addition of these barriers should help to improve program impact and job train more youth. Additional barriers voted on earlier in the year are 1. unemployed after failure to hold a job three times in the last year for 45 days or fewer and 2. state involved youth. Cal said that we are presenting the new barriers to the state for approval. Both Chairman Bevilacqua and Mayor Lantigua congratulated committee members on a job well done at the MVWIB meeting.

Megan Shea asked if we were going to address the issue raised by Sam Martin from Commonwealth Corporation regarding creaming of applicants. Deborah said that we will still focus on youth with great need and we can revisit this item if it is not working well. She said that she had a conversation with Sam the day after the meeting to discuss this and he seemed more amenable. Megan also said that Sam mentioned restructuring of the program. Ralph said that these barriers are a local supplement to WIA regulations and will in no way eliminate the need to serve the economically disadvantaged youth. This is still the focus.

Cal Williams said that WIA regulations define eligibility barriers as: dropouts, deficient in basic literacy, homeless, ex-offender and pregnant and parenting.

Linda Piergeorge asked if this would be for placements in Haverhill and Lawrence only. Deborah said that funding restricted to Lawrence, Methuen and Haverhill only applied to YouthWorks. The new barriers expand which youth are eligible for service throughout the region.

Irene Chalek said that we keep referring to barriers but perhaps we should use other terms that more clearly state that we're including more youth amongst those who we can serve. Deborah said that the terminology is used in the WIA legislation but that the term is counter-intuitive. We are increasing the number of barriers to success that youth experience in order to expand participant eligibility. Donna Rivera asked if we assess literacy skills and Chili explained that is part of the intake process at ValleyWorks Career Center.

Deborah then handed out the list of the ten elements that must be offered in WIA youth programs. They can be provided by the Career Center and/or by vendors. Ralph remarked that while parts of the State stress that we serve the hardest to serve youth through educational remediation, other parts of the State simultaneously push STEM initiatives that require higher level science and math aptitude.

#### **IV. Youth RFP Design**

Ralph said that one result of the change in barriers is that now vendor RFPs will be different and we need to discuss what those changes might be. There has been some talk of a two year program and that's possible but that would mean fewer youth would be served. He mentioned the possibility of a Japanese-style after school program for in-school youth that might also include Saturday morning classes. An incentive could be that students participating in such a program would be given priority for YouthWorks summer jobs. We need to strengthen and value those studious youth who have so far not been eligible and who might, for example, been bullied by a delinquent neighbor who was eligible for help getting a summer job.

We can now help economically disadvantaged youth who are working hard towards academic goals. We can discuss ideas on what we might want to do going forward and new ways and new programs to serve youth.

Linda Piergeorge mentioned she recently saw programming that said the reason we are behind other countries is the teachers unions. Some young teachers would gladly stay after school or come on Saturday mornings but the unions won't allow that.

Howard Allen said that the Japanese and German models has been around for some time and those students are far ahead of us, having 3 ½ more years of school than American students. Both systems have the government behind them and culturally families are behind that model. We don't have that commitment in the United States. Howard said one of the issues in America is that parents expect the schools to educate the children, but educators can't discipline them. We may have to go back to the model we grew up with of quasi-tutoring.

Megan said that depending on the source of funding, WIA has specific outcomes and at the end of the course the participants have to be employed. We will need to seek other funding sources to piggyback with WIA funding. Cal said that is the plan now that we have Susan Almono as the Resource Development Manager.

Donna Rivera said that she has interns working on math and science deficiencies. Some also need to work on deficiencies in literacy. Perhaps the problem is the negative effects of concentrated poverty and we need to level the playing field. She said that the system is hard to change at this point.

Megan said that we need to look at the continuity of funding and where to build bridges. Deborah said that workforce development and education used to be siloed but that has changed. DESE and EOLWD now partner on initiatives.

Ralph said that he'd spoken to Ed Warnhuis at another meeting and Ed told him that about 200 students at Lawrence High School are in AP courses. That means that not everyone is failing and perhaps we need to increase our effort to target those in the middle and help them move up.

Cal suggested distributing an example of our previous RFP design. Cal said that council members can look at the design and submit suggestions. The RFP will not be distributed because some of the Youth Council members will be applying for funds. The Youth Council has a general discussion regarding populations to be served and goals we would like to see attained in the Merrimack Valley.

Ralph said that we should consider whether we want to get a group training RFP out by January or if we should use youth money for ITAs and take a year to redesign what we want to do for youth group training. He asked Chili whether the new barriers would also apply for ITAs and Chili answered that they would.

In the past the RFP said that participants would 1.) get a GED; or 2.) increase their grade level through academic remediation; and 3.) get a job. The eligibility change would remove getting a GED as an obligatory component but employment and educational gain would remain. Participants could instead obtain work-related certifications or ESOL or academic remediation from a higher start point as indicated via pre- and post- testing.

Heidi Riccio said that the Greater Lawrence Voc School has had success getting youth the same professional certificates that adults obtain.

April Lyskowsky said that Youth Build is an education and vocational training and career development program but the problem is that there are no jobs when participants finish. The missing piece is the bridge with employers who are concerned that the youth who they hire

will not commit 100%. We need to figure out a way to create a bridge that relieves the financial risk and obligations on the employer.

Chili said that we were successful with ARRA funds putting youth with employers for 3 to 4 weeks as interns who were then hired if they proved themselves. The feds are now talking about stimulus funds and a year-round summer works type program. Chili also said that right now you can't do OJT for youth but the state is looking for a waiver.

Cal William also said that there is a high cost for training in the private sector and businesses don't want to waste money. Brad Howell said that his observation is that what we need to do is look at the short term and long-term issues for the design of the RFP as we often try to develop long term strategy in an hour. We need to define what we want to accomplish and seek sustainable funding for certificate programs and create a plan to get this done.

Cal said that perhaps they could hold a retreat in the near future. Deborah mentioned that we do a yearly Annual Plan for the state and that may be a place to start.

Irene Chalek then talked about working on pathway models through the P21 grant and the piece they struggle with is the business partnerships. There is an occupational advisory board and business representatives participating on boards. Perhaps we could use a small percentage of funds to identify an individual whose role is to create business relationships for students to move into.

Deborah said that these are the ideas we are trying to pull together and talked about a recent forum that Commonwealth Corporation held on the dropout rate and best practices. She said that we do need to identify our short and long term goals.

There was discussion on OJT and Linda Piergeorge talked about an OJT program that Mass Rehab uses with employers who get a tax incentive. Cal said that the next three meetings should be dedicated to working on a map on where we want to go.

Ralph said that what employers want is to make money. They want respectful, easy to train individuals who can understand what's said to them and who can articulate sensible questions. We currently have a vendor who has done well and we want to explore expanding the pool of vendors who can provide a variety of youth training activities.

Heidi Riccio from Greater Lawrence Technical High School said that they have had more successes than failures over the last five years. She said that they increased their standards significantly. She credits the success of apprenticeship programs to the dedication and commitment of the people who are running the program.

**V. Updates, New Initiatives & Related Funding for the next twelve months**

**i. OSY Education & EMT and Education & Food Service Programs – Youth referred, enrolled and job-placed from first cycle**

Deborah reported on the OSY Education and EMT program. There has been much difficulty recruiting appropriate youth for the program because of a need for a driver's license, HS Diplomas or GEDs prior to EMT training and clean CORIs. Those older youth who met the requirements were referred to the adult EMT program to ensure enough participants to run that program. Ralph said that we grappled with why filling programs is so difficult but hopefully the expanded barriers will help.

Cycle one of the Food Service program was successful. There were six internships at related businesses and jobs at exit at the Market Basket Deli, Fuddruckers and the Olive Garden.

- ii. **Pathways to MCAS Success**
- iii. **Connecting Activities – Internships, CCD, Job Shadow Day, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Career Fair, Financial Literacy Fair, Externships**
- iv. Deborah reported that the Pathways to Success and Connecting Activities programs are doing well.

Heidi Riccio spoke about dropout research and a DESE grant that also works to educate parents with ELA and citizenship classes. She said that educating parents helps them encourage their children to look toward the future.

## **VI. Adjournment**

**Having no further business Brad Howell made a motion to adjourn seconded by Howard Allen. Motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Mary Kivell*

Mary Kivell  
Recorder