



YOUTH COMMITTEE

MINUTES

**Wednesday, January 11, 2017
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
439 South Union – Suite 102
Lawrence, MA 01843**

Youth Committee MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

MVWIB Youth Committee MEMBERS ABSENT:

Michael Bevilacqua, Kelly Conlin, Beverly DeSalvo, Superintendent John Lavoie, April Lyszkowsky, Sonia Morales, Donna Rivera,

MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Cristy Gomez, Mary Kivell

I. Call to Order & Introductions

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

II. Approval of December November 9, 2016 Minutes

Cal Williams called for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2016 minutes.

Motion by Lisa Remington, seconded by Ellen Weinhold, to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2016 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

III. Programs Update

Cristy Gomez presented the programs update. She said that ValleyWorks, in partnership with DYS, continues to provide youth with meaningful work experiences under a Bridging the Opportunity Gap (BOG) contract. The contract allows for 20 enrollments and as of last week there were 18. As of week ending 12/30/16 there were 11 youth working. A total of 12 youth have been terminated from the program. Currently there are six youth working and three youth will be starting orientation this

week. There appear to be some issues with DYS case management because attendance is sometimes spotty.

Under Connecting Activities Cristy said that Jessy continues to assist local high school students, school administrators and guidance counselor by providing information on school to career opportunities. Students at the local high schools are participating in career awareness exploration and immersion activities in order to gain better understanding of career pathways and work opportunities. In addition, work-readiness workshops are being offered at the various schools which provides students with essential skills to meet employer's expectations. Jessy actively volunteers with partner agencies to help youth complete the process of applying for college, financial aid and transition to college.

Mike Strem asked about the STEM initiative and whether it is applied in connecting activities. Cristy said that there is a STEM apprenticeship at GLTS and at Haverhill High School.

YouthWorks Year Round – Cristy said that the funding received from Commonwealth Corporation allows us to provide subsidized employment to 26 out of school youth. During the first cycle, 14 youth completed the 20 hours Signal Success Workshops and were placed in jobs. The first cycle is expected to end next week. The second cycle is expected to start Monday, February 6th. Youth enrolled in the next cycle will work 25 hours per week for 6-7 weeks and will earn \$11.00 per hour. We are currently recruiting out of school youth from Lawrence who are between 17 - 21 years of age. If you would like to refer a youth, please contact Rosina Medina at 978-722-7051 or email her at rmedina@valleyworksgcc.org.

Cristy said that other initiatives include the Lawrence Working Families Initiative (LWFI) and the Urban Agenda Grant, VWCC has been working with Lawrence High School (LHS) in piloting an internship program. ValleyWorks staff has been working with LHS partners on this project. The program was piloted this fall, and partnership staff is working closely with Jessy to ensure that we provide wrap-around Connecting Activities services. The first semester resulted in 18 referrals, 12 youth who began internships, and 8 who really "stuck to it."

LHS is very happy with this result. As the first group youth are finishing up the semester, the goal is to double the program – first, seeing the 8 youth and their employer partners are interested in continuing; and then working to add youth and business partners to the mix – hopefully getting up to 25 young people in Internships.

Lisa Remington talked about a new initiative to assist in school youth with significant disabilities to transition to post-secondary classes and jobs.

Rafael said that the state has a contract with O'Neill Company for referrals to other companies interested in STEM related internships but so far all the companies have only given lukewarm responses. The apprenticeship funding of \$25k does not allow paying for anything except transportation. Under Connecting Activities Boston gets a much larger grant.

Cristy also said that we also received a \$10,000 Amp It Up grant to promote manufacturing as a career. Lisa also said that there is a meeting scheduled with LARE on the electronics/HiSet program which is half filled.

Cal said that the connection with the Teamsters for CDL training is an example of good, positive innovation. Francisco Brea said that Matthias is doing a fantastic job with the teamsters. Rafael said that program is also for adults and Tom Raiche said that the hoisting license is a big deal to have as a qualification and how building is booming in Boston and there are lots of construction jobs. Francisco also spoke about Polartec and the empty building.

IV. Guest Speaker

Cal Williams then called on the guest speaker, Ed Warnshuis, a volunteer at Lawrence High School. Mr. Warnshuis said that he would try to get a five or six year history into ten minutes. Former Superintendent Wilfredo Laboy and Mayor Mike Sullivan had a great idea to build six small high schools with each wing designated to a certain discipline. Students would wear uniforms and that worked for four years but it is all gone now.

Two years ago administration came up with the idea of a 9th grade academy class and there are currently only 850 students in two wings still preserving academic themes. The next idea was a 10th grade academy so only the 11th and 12th grades had academic themes. Last year they implemented an Exam School to try to attract students who would go to schools such as Central Catholic and Pingree to Lawrence High School. Abbot occupied the library so they are now without one as the Exam School is housed in the library.

Ed is not please with recent changes but said that his observations are just his opinion as he is a volunteer with no portfolio. He said that the principals, Stacey Cyprich and Paul Neal, as well as Headmaster Mike Fiato are fabulous. He said that in spite of these changes, MCAS scores are going up due to good teaching. He said that he is deeply disappointed that what took five years to create is now being taken apart.

Mr. Warnshuis continued stating that all arrows are pointing up with almost 25% of graduates going to reputable four year schools. He said there are lots of good things but he feels we lost something it might have been good to keep. He said that Mr. Neal and the 10th GA and HHS are not teaching to the MCAS test but teaching how to write, collaborate and work in a group. The building was designed for 500 students per each

building and now there are 800+ so some students taught in other buildings. He said that something that worked well came apart for reasons her doesn't understand. Ed did say that teachers' morale is good.

Irene Chalek said she had heard something about a newcomers' school and Ed didn't have any information on that. Ed did say that the graduation numbers are going up and Mike Fiato is doing an excellent job. The kids are learning and teachers are being supported. He did said that it cost \$110m to build the school with six wings and it was working. He also said that his daughter is a teacher in Andover and the problems there are not with the students but with helicopter parents.

Francisco Brea asked if he has had any conversations with the union president and Ed said that the union president, Frank McLaughlin, is a good union guy who is very traditional and doesn't like change but he likes to get along and deals with it. Ed also said that there is no union resistance. Tom Raiche asked when the receivership will end and Ed said that Eileen Bernal, Chief of Staff, said that next year is the last year. Ed feels that they may then be looking for a Superintendent. Lawrence schools are doing better but not as well as the rest of the state.

He said that one thing he notices is that Lawrence kids are so kind to each other and there is little abuse or ostracizing of peers. Rafael said there have been some folks that say that LHS has the misfortune of having predatory gangs and Ed said that he is not naïve but that in-school that doesn't happen. Ed then handed out a report from the HHS school with the names of the students redacted that highlights their success stories.

V. WIOA & Move

Rafael Abislaiman reported that we are scheduled to open on February 1, 2017 at 255 Essex Street unless there is some last minute SNAFU. The plan is to close and move on January 26th and 27th then the following Monday, January 30th and Tuesday the 31st and be up and running at new site on February 1st.

Irene Chalek asked about parking and Rafael said that parking is either on the street or in the nearby Buckley Garage. Customers will have to pay to park which is the case in most of the other career centers.

Rafael said that WIOA is still a work in progress and we receive new/different information every day. He said that Certification may be moved over to March and the idea of a Super region is still being discussed.

VI. Partner's Information

Irene Chalek handed out information on a couple of programs that are starting at Northern Essex. There is an ESOL Financial Literacy Program beginning January 9th for 16 weeks with classes held from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. The other program is the

Nurse Assistant/Home Health Aide Training Program with an information session for the winter program (February 27th – March 31st) to be held on Wednesday, January 18, 2017 and February 1, 2017 from 10:00 – 11:00 am at the Lawrence Riverwalk.

Lisa Remington handed out three flyers on training opportunities such as CDL B and Hoisting 2 training, Nursing Assistant Training and Manufacturing opportunities. Lisa also mentioned she had gotten notice of a Transition Pathway Services Demonstration Project from MRC. Brad Howell asked about the program and Lisa said that she would give the information to Mary Kivell to forward to the members of the Youth Committee.

VII. Other Business

Mike Strem, President of Strem Chemicals, Inc. announced that this would be his last Youth Council meeting as he is scaling back his commitments but will remain a member of the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board.

VIII Adjourn

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