



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

YOUTH COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday, October 10, 2018
MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board
255 Essex Street, 4th Floor
Lawrence, MA 01840

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Howard Allen, Elizabeth Bennett, Michael Bevilacqua, Irene Chalek, April Lyskowsky, David Tagliaferri, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Francisco Brea, Brad Howell, Sonia Morales, Tom Raiche, Lisa Remington, Linda Rohrer, Katherine Sweeney, Ed Warnshuis

Staff Present:

Susan Almono, Cristy Gomez, Beverly Stopyra

Guest Present:

Erica Mowby, Jackie Romero

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Chairman Williams called the meeting to order at 11:45 a.m. Introductions were made around the table.

II. Approval of the June 13, 2018 Minutes

Chairman Cal Williams called for a motion to approve the minutes of the **June 13, 2018** meeting.

Motion by Liz Bennett and seconded by David Tagliaferri, to approve the minutes of the June 13, 2018 Youth Committee minutes as submitted, all in favor. Motion passed.

III. Guest Speaker: Susan Almono, Deputy Director & Fundraiser, Merrimack Valley Workforce Board

Susan mentioned that she has not been to a Youth Committee Meeting in quite some time and is excited to be the guest speaker. She did an overview of our new branding. Susan passed out a sheet explaining what our brand is. The launch of our new branding is set for November 15th. We will pass along the announcement. The biggest reason we decided to re-brand ourselves was because our new secretary Rosalin Acosta was not aware of the fact that we had 29 Career Centers with 16 Boards and of course our state office Department of Career Services had all different names. All the CC's have different names and a customer or employer might not even know that we are all Career Center's. Also, according to surveys employers didn't understand who we were either which gave us a sense that we really needed a unified name. The State did hire consultants and looked at our goals with our vision, mission and new values now among them. It has been a year-long process.

The MassHire vision is for a better future for people and businesses of Massachusetts through meaningful work and sustainable growth and our mission is: Mass Hire creates and sustains powerful connections between businesses and jobseekers through a statewide network of employment professionals. Each one of our systems will have emphasis on our values: Collaboration, Respect, Reliability and Ingenuity. Susan said we need to work on our customers and employer's needs.

Susan showed us a short kick off video on our new brand: MassHire. Susan showed our new logo. Pretty soon we will have a new way of doing signs. Our logo will be on the walls. The launch should be a lot of fun. We'll probably have tee shirts and our Secretary Acosta will be with us. The launch date will be November 15th. Everything will be branded. We have a new website which is marvelous. We look forward to seeing you at our launch.

Cal mentioned that while working with United Way they were all confused on the names of CC's and Boards.

IV. Program Update

Cristy provided an update on the 2018 YouthWorks Summer Jobs Program. We received 518 completed applications. We received more applications, but they were not complete. Cristy handed out a summary report. We enrolled 224 from Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen and one vulnerable youth from Andover. For any youth not enrolled in the vulnerable cohort, we would have had to return \$2000 back to CommCorp. We over enrolled so we do not have to return any money back. Most youth worked the 125 hours that were required. 65 employers participated in the program. We used all the funding allocated for our region.

The YW Summer program was intensive. We did workshops on Saturdays which were held at the Lawrence Public Library and the Lawrence YMCA. We paid a minimum fee to use the Library on Saturdays and were not charged to use the YMCA. The youth received \$11.00/hour stipend for the two days of workshops. We only job placed youth who completed 15 hours of Signal Success work readiness workshops.

We already provided CommCorp with our reports and they will provide data on our Youth.

We have 7 youth referred to the Bridging the Opportunity Gap (BOG) program. Some are enrolled in high school, but they do not have to be. We try to fit them where they feel most comfortable. Also, we got the MassHousing grant that allowed us to place 8 youth who resides in local housing courts in subsidized jobs.

We received some YouthWorks Year-Round funding for planning the 2019-2020 program.

Jackie mentioned that one the youth she mentored participated in the program and stated it was pretty good. The money the youth received was an incentive for her to do the program. She was a DYS kid who got herself in some trouble. Jackie asked if there any way to have a mentor tied into what we are doing? It was the consensus that a mentor program is a great idea.

Cristy mentioned that we had a one-hour workshop for employers on mentoring during our employer breakfast. We hope to continue working with Mass Mentoring. We highly encouraged employers to work with our local youth mentoring programs. We have so many different situations that we can only provide guidance and make referrals as appropriate.

Jackie said the mentor programs can only work with kids that have been diagnosed with needing a therapeutic mentor. Susan mentioned that our staff are very atuned to the youth needs and sort of are mentors to the youth. The logistics are enormous. It may be a good idea to connect next spring with different mentoring programs.

Cristy also said her staff are available to these youths even beyond regular program hours. Hopefully next year we will be able to work with a mentoring program to coordinate services, especially for our vulnerable youth.

Cristy mentioned that the youth who sadly passed away in the gas explosion was one of our summer youth participants.

Cristy said we are closing out our Summer Program and starting the Connecting Activities at Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, Newburyport High Schools and the Greater Lawrence Technical School. Cristy mentioned different events that are happening this month.

We have five high schools participating in Connecting Activities. One of our goals is to assist over 500 students obtain employment or internship with a work-based learning component. We will expose over 3000 students to career awareness, exploration, and immersion opportunities. Also, the CA staff will continue to support our local high schools that have internship programs. Susan mentioned that a lot of high schools already have internship programs. That is really the anchor to all of this.

Although the YouthWorks Year-Round CompTIA Prep Program with Haverhill HS students ended in June, some students are meeting once a week to get ready for the two exams. The teacher is volunteering few hours per week.

Cristy gave details on the STEM Summit scheduled for November 14, 2018 at the DCU Center in Worcester.

Cal asked if CommCorp was happy with us since they are our funding source and Cristy responded that we are meeting their expectations.

Cal suggested that we keep a Calendar of Events so we can all look at all the events happening for the youth.

V. Partner's Information

Liz Bennett gave an update on the Greater Lawrence Technical School (GLTS) and Lawrence High School (LHS) partnership. 21 students are part of this pilot program. LHS students start their day late, around 11:00 am. Then they are bussed to GLTS Pilot Program at 3:00 pm which lasts through 5:30 pm. They are hoping to scale it up next year. This year they are funded by the Smith Family Foundation. LHS students who were identified as not wanting to go to college are now enrolled in this program and attending advanced manufacturing related classes at GLTS. Besides attending classes, these students participate in fieldtrips to different companies. If they complete all their classes, they will be able to participate in co-op full time. This is a two-year program. Upon graduation they can go out into the workforce. Liz invited any of us to come over to see their operations. Students are using great machinery. They are doing projects. They are finishing with making "Lawrence Strong" signs. They are doing projects which is re-engaging them in learning. It's a very successful program.

Cal asked if there were any employers already going to see the program. Liz anticipates they will.

Cristy said they will be a lot of innovation programs like this one through Connecting Activities. Susan spoke about the Northeastern Advanced Manufacturing Consortium. Training opportunities for adults to get people employed in the entry level operator's positions. They are so interested they are going for their PSAP's. People could be hired into entry level operators but on their way and will make their way to become machinist. Youth as well as adults are taking the classes. There are plenty of jobs if people are interested.

Liz said that the program was set for 15 participants this year and ended up with 21. They received a \$500,000 Advanced Manufacturing Grant for next year. Probably end up with ten more next year. Grant to bring in a second instructor. There will be 21-25 kids. Liz added that this program is getting replicated throughout the State.

Erica Mowby, Guest mentioned that Career Resources is in the middle of merging with another non-profit - Mass Rehab commission.

Dave Tagliaferri from DMH stated that they have implemented their new model which is called ACCS - Adult and Community Clinical Services. Vinfen won the bid which they will provide enhanced clinical support. In addition to that, they are working with the opiate crisis. He thinks that Lawrence doesn't get the attention they deserve.

Mike Bevilacqua said the Chamber is still working with companies and businesses that lost business due to the gas explosion. A lot of companies are losing employees because they cannot pay their wages. Congress woman Nicki Tsongas will speak at the next Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce's Women in Business luncheon.

Howard Allen mentioned that the day that the gas explosion happened, his daughters and him, immediately engaged the Boys and Girls Club in Salem NH to coordinate donations for the Lawrence B&G club to assist club members affected by this tragedy.

Cristy mentioned that we have the AMP IT UP program which is a separate program from Connecting Activities. It was not a big grant. Three teachers involved in the externship. From what the teacher learned they will be teaching students. There were three from LHS and three from Haverhill HS that participated in the Merrimack College workshop. It was a different kind of funding. Howard mentioned that it is hard to get teachers who are interested to get involved.

Susan mentioned that the externship was so valuable. She realized that this was more of imitative that she thought would be very easy. It was very worthwhile.

Also, we recruited three teachers from Methuen Public Schools to participate in a DESE sponsored teacher externship program. Susan said that we thought we were to find the teacher and find the employer and hand it off to Fitchburg State, but it was a lot more involved than that.

Ellen Weinhold had about 58 section 8 families in Lawrence affected by the gas explosion. They are working with NEMA. There are some uncertainties whether tenants have to pay half of the rent cost. It's been kind of a nightmare as we do not want them to lose their section 8.

April Lyskowsky currently is working on an application for a new branding doing business as Lawrence Prospera. Currently servicing 60-100 youth that are most vulnerable, court involved, homeless. They will also be working with Susan and the Career Center in developing partnerships for this initiative. They will be reaching out for a program called Opportunity Youth. They work with the Lawrence Police Department and they are having an event this Saturday from 1pm – 4pm at the stadium and they give out gifts. They have a police presence. Over the summer they had youth work at beautifying the cemetery and the cemetery looks beautiful. For some young people this hits home because so many of them are involved in violence and with gangs.

Also, these youths are always looking for opportunities for housing. Homelessness is extremely high in Lawrence. The youth don't really fare well with the housing as it is now. They are working

on focusing on housing for this population. Gas explosion affected two of their projects, one being their Commercial Kitchen and the start of the Single Family Affordable Housing.

Irene Chalek from NECC will come prepared with information of their projects next meeting. They are servicing approximately 100 students with HiSet. They have evening classes in addition to their morning classes. They have an ongoing registration. Also, they have a Business Fundamental Certificate which is an intensive 20 hour a week program.

Susan said that if any of the partners know anyone that lost their job due to the gas explosions, they should apply for unemployment benefits.

Susan ended by saying that Rafael Abislaiman retired July 31st and Abel Vargas is the new interim Executive Director.

VI. Other Business

No other business.

VII. Adjourn

Having no further business Chairman made a motion to adjourn, Michael Bevilacqua second the motion; all in favor. Motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Stopyra

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Recorder