

DRAFT Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board, Inc. DRAFT
Meeting Minutes
12/17/08
Wamsutta Club

Members Present: David DeJesus, Jr., **Chair**; David A. Cabral, Richard Colon, Paul F. Correia, Edward J. Dennehy, Charles DiPirro, David J. Ferreira, Jenny T. Fialho, Dennis Galvam, Andrew T. Guilbeault, Michelle N. Hantman, Edward Lobo, Roger W. Masson, Richard F. Mello, Bruce Morell, Peter J. Muise, Joan Ann Niles, Joseph Notini, Alice Oliveira, Christopher J. O'Neil, David A. Pelletier, Susan B. Peterson, Michael R. Shea, James F. Snow, Caroline St. Don, Louis St. John, Jeffrey Travers, Robert V. Ward, Jr., Corinn Williams

Members Absent: Lawrence W. Bennett, James Butler, Thomas G. Davis, Charles N. Decas, John Fernandes (called), Fernando Garcia, Nelson Hockert-Lotz, Lisa A. Jochim (called), Walter Jones, Lisa M. Lemieux (called), Dr. Jean F. MacCormack, David R. Maher (called), Helena S. Marques, Roy Nascimento, James C. Nichols, Maria O. Pinarreta (called), Ronald F. Rheaume, Cynthia Rodrigues, Ronald L. Rouillard, Charles D. Ryan, Anthony R. Sapienza (called), Dr. John J. Sbrega (called), Charles R. Simpson, Jr. (called), Charles E. Winterhalter (excused)

WIB Staff Present: Bridget Alexander, Director of Development, Craig Baker, Chief Operating Officer; Len Coriaty, Executive Director/CEO; Jean Fox, Youth Council Director, Steven Grant, Chief Financial Officer; Annie Massicotte, Business Office Manager; Jason Wentworth, *LiteracyWorks* Entrepreneur

Workforce System Staff Present: Diann Haynes, NDS; Deb Marcondes, NDS; Tim Nelson, Wareham CC

Guests: Norm Audette, Liaison to CEO; Rick Bowie, MassMEP; Barbora Hazuková, Training Resources of America - South Shore; Janet Lebel, Aide to U.S. Senator John Kerry; Dianne C. Rivet, GNB Youth Council; Christine Shannon, BCC; Rosemary Wilde, New Bedford Public Schools

Greeting and Call to Order: Chair DeJesus called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. He welcomed the Board and announced that Mike Longo had joined the staff as a part-time project manager for education and training and as a liaison with Mayor Lang. He also noted that Marilyn Whalley had resigned her position at the Wareham Community and Economic Development Office and, as a result, her position with the WIB. Chair DeJesus also welcomed Chris O'Neil as the Chair of the Business Development Committee and thanked Paul Correia for his service as Interim Chair, noting that Mr. Correia will remain on the committee in the capacity of Vice Chair. He announced that the latest issue of the GNBWIB eNewsletter will be going out soon, as will a survey requesting feedback on alternative locations for WIB meetings, especially locations in the catchment area other than the city of New Bedford. There were several important dates to remember: February 5, 2009 is the date for the Legislative Breakfast, which will be at the Wamsutta Club; on February 18, final comments and suggestions for the High Performing Board application must be submitted; and the next WIB Quarterly meeting will be on March 18, 2009. Location TBD.

Chair DeJesus mentioned that he would be taking the "Reports" portion of the agenda out of order and start with Ed Dennehy's presentation on the Career Center. He also noted that Ed and Brenda Francis should be congratulated for exceeding WIA performance goals and earning the \$20,000 incentive award.

Mr. Coriaty then requested that the Board vote on the final draft **Minutes of the September 17, 2008 Quarterly Meeting** distributed today, as these minutes contain clarifications for the initial draft minutes. Ms. Peterson made a motion to accept the final draft minutes, and Mr. Morell seconded the motion. The vote carried unanimously.

Ms. Peterson made a motion to accept the **Treasurer's Report (through October 31, 2008)**, and Mr. Ferreira seconded. The vote carried unanimously.

Ms. Alexander then presented the Mission Story. She read a letter from Charles Delisle of The Energy Doctor who is an instructor and program coordinator for the Weatherization Technician Training Program funded through grants from Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance (SEEAL) and NSTAR. In the letter Mr. Delisle related his positive experience in the Weatherization training program, the relationships and interactions with the individuals in the program, and his appreciation for the support of the WIB encouraging other businesses to partner with the WIB when assistance is needed. Chair DeJesus thanked Ms. Alexander for all her work in bringing this effort to fruition.

Service Provider Presentation

Chair DeJesus noted that there will be presentations from service providers at future meetings as part of an overall effort to inform the Board. Since the Career Center is at the center of workforce development, detailed information on its services is an appropriate place to begin.

Mr. Dennehy's presentation, "Career Center Job Seeker Services," provided a snapshot of the services provided, with examples of how customers utilize specific offerings. Most customers need intensive services – one-on-one services – but the resources do not support that level of assistance. All customers can receive core services – including use of the resource room, participation in workshops, and preparation and transmittal of resumes and cover letters in response to job openings. It is extremely difficult to document "entered employments" for those who are self-directed and receive only core services. With the recent surge in layoffs and unemployment claims, increased numbers of people are coming into the Career Center. In addition, the unemployment telephone system is overburdened, so people are going to the Career Center to file claims rather than wait on the telephone. However, the wait at the Career Center is still about 1.5 hours.

In the first example, Mr. Dennehy described the process undertaken by individuals looking for unemployment assistance. Currently averaging about 100 people per day, the customers first sign in to receive personal claims service. At the present time, only two employees have the specialized state training to provide this service. However, there are two other employees now in training to augment the service delivery capability of the Career Center. Those two employees have been pulled from their job development roles to provide the needed unemployment assistance.

The process for those coming to the Career Center looking for work includes first inputting their data into the MOSES system. A rather quick preliminary assessment is then conducted, and they are directed to an appropriate workshop, such as resume writing or interviewing strategies. Those individuals meeting eligibility criteria are assigned a case manager and are given a more comprehensive assessment. From that assessment, the case manager determines whether or not there is a suitable training program for them and addresses such issues as childcare, housing, and transportation. The ITA system is utilized to pay for training. While in training, the individuals are followed by the case managers. Once the training is complete, individuals are directed to a job specialist whose then tries to match them to a job.

It is important to note that training is not provided to all eligible customers. The Career Center uses a Case Conference forum to determine who will obtain the greatest benefit from specialized training. Anyone possessing marketable skills is promptly directed to a job specialist. The case managers track all customers for a full year after landing a job.

A number of customers have solid skills and are free to use the resource room, attend workshops, and apply for jobs. They may also meet with a job specialist. The lion's share of customers receive this level of support. Only about 10% receive intensive services.

In another example, Mr. Dennehy discussed the vocational education and skills training program. New Directions has a performance contract through the Department of Transitional Assistance. DTA referrals are assigned a case manager right away. Career Center staff assess, train the referrals, and assist them in their job search. The latest data show that 48 people were referred from DTA, and 28 entered employment. The contract pays for services rendered, and there is a payment from DTA for each entered employment as well. Currently, there is a Performance Fund amount of \$186,000.

Ms. Peterson asked if people may apply for unemployment assistance online. Mr. Notini of DCS acknowledged that it is not possible at this time, but the Division of Unemployment Assistance is developing the capacity to do so. However, people can check their balances and certify their job search efforts online at this time.

Mr. DeJesus asked how long the ITA money is expected to last, noting that it was gone by February last year. Mr. Dennehy stated that this "funding of last resort" is only used when all other options are exhausted. For example, some people may be able to obtain Pell Grants or Labor Union money for training. If there are no options, ITA money is used. The maximum allowable amount per person is \$4,000. The money covers training, the computer lab, and the in-house GED program. As of now, Mr. Dennehy projects that there will be no ITA funds after the end of January. He also noted that there is some additional adult money targeted to much-needed ABE and ESOL rather than skills training because of the increasing need to bolster educational levels.

Mr. Dennehy's presentation contained a table showing customers served over the last couple of years. In FY 07, 9,596 customers made 47,199 visits and were served by 62 staff members. Projections for FY 09 indicate that over 15,600 people will walk through the Career Center's doors 56,530 times, with only 60 staff available to assist them. Mr. Dennehy praised the good work of the Career Center staff.

Committee Reports:

Executive Committee: Chair DeJesus made note of the Strategic Plan working group that has been convening to review the state's feedback from the unsuccessful September application and to conduct detailed discussions around building a stronger application. Maria Pinarreta, Ron Rouillard, John Fernandes, Paul Correia, and Peter Muise have all joined the Chair and WIB staff for these meetings. The Chair also noted that WIB membership will be capped at 45 by the end of next year. He welcomed input from the membership on individuals that they believe will be active and engaged.

Finance and Performance Measurement:

Mr. Morrell reiterated Mr. Dennehy's observation of declining educational levels among customers, which impacts the adult ITAs. At Mr. Dennehy's request, \$61,000 of ITA dollars were transferred to ABE/ESOL programs. Regarding Performance Measurement, Mr. Morell noted that there has been significant committee discussion about the strategic plan and the very limited use of Workforce Training Fund grants in this region. In addition, discussion relative to the High Performing Board application has been ongoing, with the committee in agreement that the WIB should re-apply in the second round. In the event that the application is unsuccessful, additional state feedback will be beneficial going into the third round.

Strategic Planning: Craig Baker then took the floor to explain that the state is seeking clarification on those services and efforts undertaken on behalf of specific populations. He emphasized the WIB's policymaking role, noting that the WIB operates under the Workforce Investment Act and complies with the terms of the Act. However, the state is asking for priorities for populations above and beyond what is mandated. He then requested guidance and feedback from the members of the Board in connection with their concept of population priorities.

Ms. Peterson suggested considering women with dependent children a priority population, noting that women continue to experience pay inequity in employment, yet they tend to have full responsibility for children. All ethnic groups, ex-offenders, youth, and older workers could be part of this priority population.

Mr. Dennehy observed that the WIB efforts are often directed by resource availability, noting that the state and federal governments have prioritized ex-offenders. It is critically important to develop a plan to ensure that the infrastructure is in place when funds become available. Mr. Baker agreed with the premise of the strategy, but he emphasized the need to identify for the state specific priority populations in order to highlight areas where funding voids and gaps exist.

Dean Ward noted that accelerating foreclosures and the resultant surge in homelessness should be considered. Furthermore, unemployment numbers are extremely high at present. The "recently displaced" will overwhelm the system in short order. Perhaps there should be a focus on quick turnaround for those with some skill sets so that resources can be reserved for those most in need.

Mr. Morell stated that selecting one group over another is difficult. However, he believes that out-of-school youth should remain a top priority as they are the future work force. Mr. Muise noted his agreement; however, he expressed a level of frustration because declining resources are impacting good programs.

Corinn Williams suggested pairing up populations with different sectors as a policy move. She cited youth and green jobs as an example.

Dean Ward suggested that the issues confronting Greater New Bedford today are issues that have never been a part of the culture. Expanding "white collar displacement" may conflict with the customer base that has traditionally been served through the Career Centers.

Chair DeJesus asked the Board if they would like to have more information about certain populations and what has been occurring with them. Mr. Morell agreed with Dean Ward, observing that this is "uncharted territory," with significantly more people who have never been unemployed now in need of services. Therefore, more information

about first-time job seekers would be very helpful. Mr. O'Neil suggested that more and more older workers are now out of work. This is a population that will need more attention as well.

Mr. Galvam supported Mr. Muise's observation in connection with youth, noting that other avenues should be explored for youth. He explained that NSTAR has collaborated with Bunker Hill Community College for several years on a program to train telephone linemen. The ranks of linemen are diminishing as present employees age out and retire, yet this type of employment has not been a popular option among younger workers. The training has been very helpful in staffing up. NSTAR would like to introduce a similar program to this region "when things are right."

Business Development Committee:

Mr. O'Neil reviewed committee discussion from the September meeting, noting that the committee developed a list of objectives to guide their work. A comprehensive fundraising plan, a refined, actionable marketing plan, and targeted workforce initiatives, such as Brownfields, Green Jobs, and weatherization are among the objectives noted. The marketing plan is expected to include a revamped website and a new logo as part of an overall objective to update the way the WIB is viewed by the public. Fundraising and outreach will extend to areas beyond New Bedford, with "WIB ambassadors" from catchment-area communities to inform the towns and to augment interaction with the WIB. He went on to state that greater promotion of the good work of the WIB is essential.

Mr. Coriarty thanked Mr. O'Neill for accepting the chairmanship and asked the Board to review page 11 of the report. There is a noteworthy progression of activities and undertakings by the WIB that leaves the WIB well positioned and prepared to be responsive now and in the future, particularly in the area of Weatherization and Green Jobs.

CQI Training:

Craig reminded the Board that there had been funds reserved for a consultant to work with staff and WIB leadership. That effort is on hold for the time being, pending further information on the impact of the 9 (c) cuts and the economic situation. It is possible that CQI will be revisited by the end of the fiscal year.

Asking if there was any other business, the Chair acknowledged Chris Shannon, who introduced herself as the new Tech Prep Director at Bristol Community College and a recently appointed member of the Youth Council. She praised the efforts of Jean Fox in her role as a member of the Tech Prep Advisory Board.

Chair DeJesus thanked board members for attending and invited them to join him and the WIB staff at the Holiday Reception in the next room. He also thanked Annie Massicotte for her assistance in organizing the board meeting and the holiday social.

Being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Mello
Clerk