

**DRAFT    Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board, Inc.    DRAFT**  
**Quarterly Meeting Minutes**  
**03/18/09**

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth  
800 Purchase Street – New Bedford, MA

**Members Present:** David DeJesus, Jr., **Chair**; Paul F. Correia, Thomas G. Davis (sent proxy), Edward J. Dennehy, John Fernandes, David J. Ferreira, Dennis Galvam, Michelle N. Hantman, Lisa A. Jochim, Lisa M. Lemieux, Dr. Jean F. MacCormack (sent Lee Blake as proxy), Helena S. Marques, Roger W. Masson, Richard F. Mello, Bruce Morell, Peter Muise, Joseph Notini, Alice Oliveira, Christopher J. O’Neil, Maria O. Pinarreta, Ronald L. Rouillard, Dr. John J. Sbrega, Michael R. Shea, Charles R. Simpson (sent proxy), Charles N. Sisson (sent Rita Boudreau as proxy), Louis St. John, Jeffrey Travers

**Members Absent:** Lawrence W. Bennett, James Butler, David Cabral (called), Richard Colon, Charles N. Decas, Charles DiPirro, Jenny T. Fialho, Fernando Garcia, Andrew T. Guilbeault, Nelson Hockert-Lotz, Walter Jones, Edward Lobo (called), David R. Maher (called), Roy Nascimento (called), James C. Nichols, Joan Ann Niles (called), Ronald F. Rheume, Cynthia Rodrigues, Charles D. Ryan, Anthony R. Sapienza, James F. Snow (called), Caroline St. Don (excused), Dean Robert V. Ward, Corinn Williams

**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

**Guests:** Barbora Hazuková, TRA – South Shore; Robert Koczera, State Representative; Patricia McPartland, AWARD Program; Terri Nowell, Aide for Mark C. Montigny Joshua Robertson, Weatherization Program

**Greeting and Call to Order**

Chair DeJesus called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and announced 4 Proxy votes: Chancellor Jean MacCormack, represented by Lee Blake; Charles Sisson, represented by Rita Boudreau; Charles Simpson, and Tom Davis, both gave their proxy to the Chair.

In other announcements, the Chair informed the Board that the next WIB eNewsletter will be out by the end of the month. He then noted a number of upcoming events.

**Consent Agenda:**

The **Minutes** of the December 17, 2008 Quarterly meeting, as well as the **WIB Treasurer’s Report** through January 31, 2009 were unanimously approved upon a motion made by Peter Muise and seconded by Ron Rouillard.

**Service Provider Presentation:**

Paul Correia of LifeStream, Inc. made a brief presentation of his organization, noting that there are many parts to the service delivery system, and a portion of that system is addressed through LifeStream’s work with Department of Transitional Assistance clients. LifeStream was launched in 1979 by parents of people with disabilities. Funding is primarily through the state. The DTA aspect of LifeStream’s operation has been in place for about 20 years, and has expanded in response to the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, which requires that people obtain training and secure employment quickly. Most of the clientele have poor skills, no high school diploma, and are parents of young children. Currently, LifeStream is working with about 250 DTA referrals. A plan is developed for all individuals, and they are coached in job readiness and other aspects of career development. In addition, LifeStream’s 425 employees undergo a stringent series of trainings as required by the Department of Mental Retardation.

Employer benefits include prescreening and tax incentives. Individuals are also eligible for tax breaks, and LifeStream attempts to provide guidance in tax filing for clients.

LifeStream has a strong niche in healthcare. They have trained 1,000 CNAs, who have been placed in jobs from Boston to the Cape. For March, they have already placed 18 in jobs. The success rate averages 95%, with a 90-day retention rate of 80%. The average starting wage is \$10.50 per hour. Other job categories include banking, food service, and manufacturing. An effective job match is essential.

**Committee Reports**

- Executive Committee

Chair DeJesus recalled the extensive discussions relative to the High Performing Board application during the December Quarterly meeting. The application for HPB status was filed in September. Although unsuccessful, the GNBWIB received good

feedback for a subsequent effort. A group was convened to move the HPB process forward, with the expectation that an application would be submitted in March. However, with the significant changes in the economic climate, the WIB's focus had to be re-directed. In addition, Mayor Lang called a meeting on January 6 to discuss Career Center operations in response to concerns in connection with sharp increases in unemployment claims. The Mayor requested a comprehensive operations review and sought, at that time, to identify ways to improve services using available resources. This effort began a process that is ongoing, with Craig Baker and Ed Dennehy taking leading roles in examining the Career Center as well as outlining courses of action. Many actions have been implemented already, with positive results. The average time people receive unemployment checks is now down to about 3 weeks. The plan of action and the action steps appear in the report for review by the Board. The WIB must report back to the Mayor on a 30-, 60-, and 90-day basis. That said, Chair DeJesus further noted that there are broad-based, state-wide efforts that will be undertaken with the Mayor's support. The Mayor will be receiving some detailed information from the WIB, then scheduling a meeting with Secretary Bump and Director Taylor. The bottom-line focus will be on outcomes and practical measures. Mr. Baker added that there may be additional modification and/or expansion of action items as stimulus dollars begin flowing into the region. Chair DeJesus urged the Board to review the document, noting the "we are ahead of the curve" in confronting this national issue.

Mr. Rouillard observed that some states' unemployment funds are becoming insolvent due to the spike in claims. Mr. Dennehy and Mr. Notini did not believe that Massachusetts faced insolvency and noted that the extensions for claims are funded with federal dollars. Trust fund dollars come from an employer tax. Mr. Notini added that DWD has made a request for two more claims processors for New Bedford to handle the increased volume of claimants, acknowledging that additional staffing is only a "band-aid, not a solution.

Chair DeJesus then indicated that he and Len have been working with Mayor Lang on the composition of the Board, with a goal of 45 members. Recommendations have been submitted and accepted by the Mayor. The changes are slated to occur over the next couple of months.

- Finance and Performance Measurement Committee

Bruce Morell noted that he not been able to attend the last several meetings; however, the budget remains fluid and will not likely be finalized this fiscal year. The line of credit was accessed for a few days to meet cash flow obligations due to delays in money coming from the state. He further noted that ITAs have been re-allocated to adult training in response to the need for more remedial training. Roger Masson stated that the New Directions Charter review was discussed extensively at the last meeting. The Charter clearly needs some revision and updating; however, the need to plan for stimulus dollars and the ongoing challenges of meeting the needs of the unemployed impact the ability of staff to devote the necessary time and effort to make those changes. As a result, the Committee voted to extend the Charter to June 30, 2010. A recommendation on whether or not to sole source or issue an RFP should be made by the end of December 2009. Mr. Masson then asked the Board to vote on the Charter Extension. Mr. Mello made a motion to support extending the Charter until June 30, 2010, which was seconded by Mr. Morell. The Board voted in the affirmative, with Mr. Dennehy abstaining.

- Business Development Committee

Committee Chairman O'Neil reported that 4 out of 7 graduates of the Weatherization Technician Training pilot had secured full time employment. He also noted that the committee has held a couple of general meetings and has formed some working groups to examine marketing, the website, brochure development, and to bring clarity to the roles of the WIB, New Directions, and the Career Center. Other discussions have ensued regarding how the WIB is perceived in the community and how the various entities work together, particularly among businesses. Mr. O'Neil stressed the need to inject new language into the Charter with an emphasis on providing answers to businesses on where they go for specific services and/or assistance. The Committee will be preparing a set of recommendations for the Executive Committee regarding lead operator services. He noted that the lead operator may not be clear on what the business community needs. In addition, Mr. O'Neil suggested that there is an opportunity to form a better relationship among the entities that work together.

Mr. O'Neil went on to say that the Committee has discussed New Directions' 501(c)(3) status, which tends to generate a level of mistrust and friction. Recent dialogue has been productive, especially the discussions with New Directions' marketing consultant. The Committee's challenge extends far beyond the website to a more inclusive funding discussion. Other outreach is ongoing. He and Ms. Alexander met with a representative of Downtown New Bedford Inc. and learned that many small businesses are unaware of the WIB's role in the community and in economic development. Ms. Alexander will be working on some mini-grants with small downtown businesses to help them with a number of resource generation options.

Discussion then ensued relative to action item #15. Mr. Muise suggested that part of the effort should include services that can be offered for businesses. Career Centers continue to be viewed as unemployment offices. Chair DeJesus stated that the Mayor wants the business community to view the Career Center as a resource. Mr. Dennehy then observed that a "cultural shift" will need to occur, from the Career Centers all the way up to the federal government, because Career Center focus has been on the job seeker. Yet, the New Bedford Career Center has only 4 staff to help employers. Chair DeJesus also noted that the WIB is looking for closer alignment with economic development. Mr. Muise stressed the need to develop a marketing plan that will change the Career Center image going forward. Mr. Coriaty stated that Career Center capacity and direction need greater

definition and pointed to Hampden County, which is a high performing board, and their focus on the 100 largest businesses because 80% of all jobs are with those employers.

- Youth Council

Youth Council Chair Fernandes stated that the WIB is still waiting to hear if it will be awarded the Pathways Out of Poverty (SWEATER) grant. This joint New Bedford-Fall River opportunity has the potential to provide green jobs training to area youth, which has been an area of interest to the Youth Council for quite some time. Chair Fernandes also spoke about last month's Green Conference at which labor, education, employers, and others gathered to discuss green jobs. He noted the work of Ms. Alexander on the SEA-Green website, which will be an important resource for employers, job seekers, and others. He mentioned the upcoming regional youth summit scheduled for April 30 at the ATMC. Andy Sum of Northeastern University is a featured presenter.

Other topics Chair Fernandes shared with the Board included the regular "Youth Speaks" sessions of the Quarterly meetings, the latest figures on P-21 and the impending P-21 cuts, Hampden County's Workplace Readiness certificate program, an update on Connecting Activities, and the fact that YouthWorks is likely to become both summer and school year statewide. He also noted that the Planning Committee is expected to meet later in the day to review a significantly revamped In-School and Out-of-School RFP and to discuss plans for stimulus funds. He observed that increased program monitoring, as a means to improve and enhance programming, is an activity the Youth Council would like to see expanded.

### **Mission Story**

Joshua Robertson reported on his experience in the Weatherization Technician Training program, from which he graduated on February 13<sup>th</sup>. The program started with two 40 hour weeks in the classroom and from there moved into the 10 week internship phase, which encompassed two days on the jobsite and classroom experience on Friday mornings. A major obstacle for the participants was transportation. Mr. Robertson detailed how several participants overcame the transportation issue by sharing a truck. He is proud of his accomplishment in the training program and noted that he quickly obtained employment.

### **Election of GNB WIB Assistant Treasurer**

Chair DeJesus presented a nominee for Assistant Treasurer (for the remainder of FY '09) as follows: Peter J. Muise. Chair DeJesus opened the floor to further nominations. With none offered, John Fernandes moved to close nominations, which was seconded by Richard Mello. Nominations were officially closed.

### **Motion**

Chair DeJesus made a **motion to elect Peter J. Muise to Assistant Treasurer as presented**. The motion received a second, and carried unanimously.

The GNB WIB elected Peter J. Muise as Assistant Treasurer for the remainder of FY '09.

### **ARRA Stimulus Funds**

Chair DeJesus then stated that some \$2.9 million in stimulus funding is anticipated locally. The WIB is pulling together a regional team, comprised of about 25 people from various sectors representing a broad cross section, which will be exploring the best ways to utilize the stimulus funding in the region. Ms. Boudreau asked if there was representation from the elder community on the team. Mr. Coriaty stated that he would follow up on that. Ms. Boudreau further noted that there are stimulus dollars for senior citizens as well, and that Coastline Elderly would be looking to establish some partnerships. Mr. Muise requested that the actions and recommendations of the team be made as public and transparent as possible.

A motion was made by Peter Muise to Ratify the Executive Committee's plan to establish a Regional Implementation Team (RIT) that would be charged with developing the local ARRA workforce strategy. Seconded by Bruce Morell, and carried unanimously.

### **Other Business / Community Input**

None

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:20am on a motion by Alice Oliveira.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Mello  
Clerk