

DRAFT Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board, Inc. DRAFT
Special Meeting Minutes
05/21/2009
Wamsutta Club

Members Present: David DeJesus, Jr., **Chair**; David Cabral (gave Proxy); Paul Correia (gave Proxy), Edward J. Dennehy, Charles DiPirro, John Fernandes (gave Proxy), David J. Ferreira (gave Proxy), Lisa A. Jochim (gave Proxy), Lisa M. Lemieux, Helena S. Marques, Roger W. Masson (gave Proxy), Richard F. Mello, Bruce Morell, Peter J. Muise, Roy Nascimento (gave Proxy), Joan Ann Niles, Joseph Notini (sent Beth Costa as Proxy), Christopher J. O'Neil (gave Proxy), Maria O. Pinarreta, Ronald F. Rheame, Anthony R. Sapienza, Dr. John J. Sbrega, Charles R. Simpson, Jr. (gave Proxy), Caroline St. Don, Louis St. John, Jeffrey Travers, Corinn Williams

Members Absent: Lawrence W. Bennett, James Butler, Richard Colon, Thomas G. Davis (called); Charles N. Decas, Jenny T. Fialho, Dennis Galvam, Fernando Garcia, Andrew T. Guilbeault, Michelle N. Hantman (called), Nelson Hockert-Lotz, Walter Jones, Edward Lobo, Jean F. MacCormack, David R. Maher, James C. Nichols, Alice Oliveira (excused), Cynthia Rodrigues, Ronald L. Rouillard (called), Charles D. Ryan, Michael R. Shea (called), Charles N. Sisson, James F. Snow, Robert V. Ward, Jr.

WIB Staff Present: Bridget Alexander, Director of Development, Craig Baker, Chief Operating Officer; Len Coriarty, 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: Beth Costa, DCS

Guests: Norm Audette, Mayor's Liaison; Representative Robert Koczera; Scott W. Lang, Mayor of New Bedford; Patricia McPartland, Upper Cape Tech Program; Barbara Tighe, Tighe Technology Services; Rosemary Wilde, NB Public Schools;

Greeting and Call To Order

Chair DeJesus called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. He then announced 10 Proxies, Joseph Notini granted his proxy vote to Beth Costa, DCS Operations Manager, to represent him on all votes taken; and he also announced the following 9 WIB members gave their proxy to the Chair: David Cabral, Paul Correia, John Fernandes, David J. Ferreira, Lisa Jochim, Roger W. Masson, Roy Nascimento, Christopher O'Neil, and Charles R. Simpson, Jr.

He then turned the floor over to Mayor Lang, who emphasized the importance of the meeting as it relates to finalizing a comprehensive plan to address the use of the federal stimulus funding locally. He further noted that the WIB's plan is the result of months of work. "The plan won't be flawless," he said, "But the key to economic recovery is not consumer spending, it's getting people to work." He further indicated that the WIB is an essential building block in the region's economic growth. Mayor Lang informed the meeting that he has had conversations with Secretary Bump regarding dollars for training, and she has an open mind to fund different programs.

Announcements

The Chair made the following announcements:

New Appointments to the Youth Council Membership

- Ms. Jennifer Donovan, Director of Operations, Junior Achievement (located in New Bedford)
- Ms. Barbara M. Sullivan, Unit Director, Boys & Girls Club of GNB (located in Wareham)

Other Announcements:

1. Thanks to the IS/OOS Proposal Readers: Carl Alves, Nancy Feeney, John Fernandes, Alice Oliveira, Dianne Rivet, Gloria Williams
2. Thanks to the YouthBuild participants; and the Mayor's Youth Council members for attending and evaluating proposal presentations. They will receive a \$25. stipend.
3. The YC needs READERS for the ARRA RFPs. It is critical that we have readers. On the heels of the Is-OOS proposal reading, our goal is 12 readers, we have 2. We will split the 12 into 3 groups of 4 readers, each with four proposals to read. Proposals are maximum of 4 pages of narrative, and we're

looking for a quality work experience and 1 outcome, job readiness, as opposed to 10 elements in the traditional youth programs. We estimate one hour per proposal over the course of the week. The Chair noted that several WIB members agreed to assist in this process.

Upcoming Events:

1. June 2 – Decisions concluded for ARRA RFRs and RFPs Jobs and Programs
2. June 10 – BCC is hosting a Regional Discussion on “The Entertainment Industry Pipeline.” President Jack Sbrega invites you to join educational, government, and workforce professionals for a regional analysis and strategic planning relating to employment opportunities in this emerging entertainment sector. Plymouth Rock Studios will give a special presentation. For more information, contact Jean Fox.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Coriaty noted two changes to the March 18 quarterly meeting minutes. On page 3, under Mission Story, he asked that the language be modified to include “the program started with two 40-hour weeks in the classroom, then moved into a 10-week internship.” Also on page 3, Mr. Coriaty added that “Peter Muise moved to ratify the ExCom’s plan to develop a Regional Implementation Team (RIT), which was seconded by Bruce Morell and carried unanimously.”

Following those changes, Mr. Sapienza moved to approve the Minutes of the March 18, 2009 Quarterly Minutes, as amended, and the WIB Treasurer’s Report (through March 31, 2009). The motion was seconded by Dr. Sbrega and passed unanimously.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

The Chair then discussed the ongoing efforts relative to ARRA, noting that \$2.9 million has been allocated locally and that the WIB’s RIT has met three times (April 2, April 16, and May 13). Also on April 16, the WIB hosted a community forum in the evening at Keith Middle School to provide information and gather input from the community. On April 24, the WIB convened area superintendents and municipal and town economic development officials from the Towns in the region to update them on ARRA activity and opportunities. The WIB and the RIT began, and continued, discussions without specific instructions from the state. Those instructions came through on April 25. “This is an historic challenge,” noted Chair DeJesus, adding, “the WIB staff and our partners have done a tremendous job developing a plan that meets local needs and the requirements of the state.” Workforce development improvements, training, meeting the skill needs of employers in high-growth industries, making it easier to advance in employment, offering training to more people, and getting public assistance to other individuals have all been requested of WIBs by the state.

Chief Operating Officer Craig Baker then explained the WIB’s plan, noting that the fundamentals appear in the Executive Summary. The version before the Board is the third draft and incorporates changes adopted during the Operations Review conducted in February. Among the operational changes are the Career Center “triage process,” an enhanced registration form that provides more data, and a labor needs template that has been developed for economic development outreach. These tools are expected to help on a number of levels, including accelerating training for infrastructure jobs.

Mr. Baker noted that there is not much new traffic at the Career Center, but the goal of the changes is to enhance service and provide needed training.

Youth Summer Jobs represent a significant portion of the funding, and some 60% of that funding must be spent by Sept. 30. \$1 million is slated for summer programs and jobs for 460 area youth. The current emphasis is on locating suitable worksites and employers.

The plan also includes funding for group training. An allocation of \$200,000 would certify 50 (20 adult, 30 dislocated) workers in weatherization and construction. Basic construction certifications and Building Performance Institute (BPI) certifications are considered essential for upcoming infrastructure projects and “green” building.

Mr. Baker observed that the recent “Dropout Prevention Report” by the UMass Dartmouth Urban Initiative emphasized the need to train for the knowledge-based economy, which, in turn, fuels economic growth. However, the region’s relatively low educational attainment rates continue to negatively impact growth. In addition, English language challenges have become a significant concern among employers. As a result, the

WIB's plan includes \$269,000 for 80 individuals to receive access to pre-GED, GED, or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction with a work readiness class. In addition, using \$30,000 of the stimulus funds may provide an opportunity to leverage the EPA Brownfields grant, permitting an additional 30 Brownfields trainees to receive the 90-hour Work Certified training.

Mr. Baker then noted that it is difficult to identify the emerging industries at this time, as the economy has not yet picked up steam. Therefore, \$266,000 in stimulus funds are designated for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), which will provide training for 89 individuals – that is in addition to the average of 140 annually. Another plan provision is a \$30,000 allocation for short-term enhancement training for people who do not take advantage of the longer-term ITAs. In addition, \$77,000 has been reserved for support services, such as transportation or child care needs.

Mr. Baker concluded by stating that because of the three RIT meetings, a public forum, an economic development forum, and media coverage, every effort has been made to keep the plan development process transparent.

Steve Grant then reported on the budget. Recent Senate budget activity has resulted in an overall budget reduction of over \$550,000 in five of the major funding streams. Impacts to the ARRA plan include a reduction of 9 planned hires to one, with all other slots being filled by current employees. Still, the plan, summarized on page 51, notes the commitment of significant dollars to training as well as the 88% of funds dedicated to youth supervision, wages, and programs. This percentage is normally at about 55%. In addition, there are no infrastructure costs tied to ARRA, which puts added pressure on regular funding, for example MOSES.

Mr. Morell noted that the sales tax increase is veto proof. He then asked if there have been any amendments to the Senate budget. Mr. Grant stated that none had been forthcoming as of this date; however, some of the Career Center money may be restored. To date, the Career Center budget was cut \$54,000. In addition, Connecting Activities was reduced to \$0, and the performance money was reduced to \$18,000 from \$189,000. Mr. Morell then asked if this reduction in DCS money will impact paying off the space liability. Mr. Grant affirmed that the impact is significant, particularly since reserves are down. About \$72,000 is needed annually for 3 years to pay back the debt. The Quest lease is at \$12,000 per year. This money is essentially a pre-paid rent.

Dr. Sbrega asked if the money for the FTEs noted earlier – those who are working on ARRA – will be gone in a year. Mr. Grant confirmed that these are current staff. There is a provision for one new hire, who will be a contract employee. There may, in fact, be some layoffs. Mr. Sapienza asked if all the layoffs would be from New Directions. Mr. Grant explained that 8 staff members are at New Directions. Some dollars are available to cover administrative staff at both New Directions and the WIB. Additionally, some administrative dollars were reallocated to the youth programs.

Mr. Sapienza then asked how the WIB intends to ensure that the 60% of youth ARRA funding is spent on time, and if the WIB is prepared for this funding. Mr. Dennehy stated that New Directions is in the midst of determining the eligibility of applicants. As of now, about 200 have been deemed eligible. Another 100 or so are expected to meet eligibility requirements by the end of the month, with a goal of 500 by the end of June. The jobs and programs are being evaluated, but in terms of slots, the region should meet its projected demand.

Mr. Grant noted that although \$997,000 was set aside for youth wages, there is some flexibility for program needs. Other considerations are number of hours and weeks.

Mr. Sapienza stressed the need for competent supervision of all youth. Mr. Coriaty stated that all employer sites and programs will be overseen by “circuit riders.”

By way of review of the report and the request for a motion, Chair DeJesus explained that the Labor Needs Template, developed by WIB staff, is a positive advance. The WIB continues to work with EDC on implementation. He then noted that of the \$2.9 million, \$1.29 million in youth funds will be expended for wages and programming for 460 youth this summer. The plan also includes group training, weatherization, ITA money, short-term enhancement, ESOL, and support services. These efforts represent “the best way to spend this money down.” He further noted that staffing will be reallocated accordingly in response to state cuts.

Mr. Sapienza asked if the funding for ESOL would be targeted to one service provider. Mr. Coriaty stated that the WIB is currently developing an RFP. The intention is not to go with a single vendor. Mr. Sapienza then

asked if the regular ITA money had been exhausted, noting that those dollars are frequently spent down rather quickly. Mr. Dennehy stated that the plan provides ITAs for an additional 89 individuals and is a significant increase, despite cuts in other funding streams. Mr. Sapienza observed that the ARRA dollars for ITAs will likely replace the funds that have been reduced.

Ms. Williams asked about the \$30,000 for short-term enhancement training and how that would be delivered. Mr. Dennehy responded that he plans to use the current vendors.

Chair DeJesus stated that the Board is being asked to take two votes. First is the Needs-Related Payments (#14 on page 22), for which the Chair read the summary. Mr. Sapienza inquired about the policy for the payments, to which Mr. Dennehy stated that there is a policy in place that will require revision to comply with state guidelines. It will be a WIB policy, which New Directions will implement. Upon a motion made by Mr. Sapienza and seconded by Ms. St. Don, the motion passed unanimously.

The other vote to be taken was for the plan itself. Upon a motion made by Mr. Muise and seconded by Ms. Pinarreta, the Board unanimously voted in favor of the ARRA Plan.

The Chair then acknowledged state Representative Koczera, whom entered the meeting just after the greeting and call to order.

Jean Fox presented information on the formula youth funding programs, noting that the Youth Council had approved all the vendors that submitted proposals. The original projection of \$560,000 in youth funding will likely have to be reduced due to recent funding reductions. Additional negotiation is required to align the budget requests with the available federal funding. Negotiations are slated to begin tomorrow.

Mr. Muise inquired about the bidders. Ms. Fox informed the Board that there was only one new bidder in this round of proposals. The Youth Council has worked hard to generate new interest but has had only marginal success to date. However, the ARRA funding has encouraged new interest in youth programming that is new and varied.

On a motion made by Ms. Niles and seconded by Mr. Muise, the Youth Council recommendations were adopted.

Mr. Coriaty then provided an update on the latest round of cuts and stimulus activity. A mid-week update from the state Senate is anticipated, with an expectation that the Shannon Grant funding of \$6.5 million will be restored. He also noted that the WTF will likely be re-approved, back up to \$5 million from zero. It had been at \$21 million. Mr. Coriaty stressed the need to "get the word out" about this needed funding. He further noted that both Connecting Activities and YouthWorks were at zero in the Senate budget. He suggested that members talk to staff, who will then inform the legislators. There is a two-day window for amendments, then conferences will go on for another several weeks.

Rep. Koczera noted that there will be a restructuring of government bills. The conference committee is empowered with making changes. Much is being taken up with Stimulus funding, he noted, both in workforce and in education. There is a continuing statewide decline in revenues, with no uptick expected until late next year or the beginning of 2011.

Other Business / Community Input

None

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Board, upon a motion made by Ms. Lemieux and seconded by Mr. Rheume, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Mello
Clerk