

MassHire Central Region Workforce Board
Executive Committee
August 18, 2023; 8:30 AM
Conducted in-person and via webex

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Janice Ryan Weekes, Paul Gilbody, Joshua Froimson, Robin Hooper
Staff: Jeff Turgeon

- J. Turgeon welcome J. Froimson, J. Ryan Weekes, and R. Hooper in person and logged in to webex to welcome P. Gilbody.
- P. Gilbody welcomed everyone to the meeting. J. Turgeon noted the meeting minutes for the last meeting in June were not available at this time. P. Gilbody asked that they be brought forth at the next meeting.
- J. Turgeon discussed the WIOA Operator procurement, outlining the role of the operator in context to the career center's services provider and their work to coordinate and aligning the career center with the various Federal workforce partners under WIOA, such as DTA, MRC, and ABE providers, etc. It was highlighted that this is a part time consultant position and not overseen day to day. Jeff also gave some background on the previous contract and the need to now go back out for procurement due to the previous consulting firm parting ways with our consultant. J. Turgeon discussed the background of the proposed candidate, Jason Matthews, noting his experience with our region (as the previous consultant) as well as other related positions he has held. He also noted for the committee that the candidate was the only bidder for the position and his proposed fee of \$10,000 annually was within our budget. This would be two year base contract with two additional one-year extensions by the City possible. After a motion by P. Gilbody and a second by J. Froimson, the motion to hire Jason matthews as the WIOA Operator passed unanimously. J. Turgeon will work with the City to set up the agreement with him.
- J. Turgeon then reviewed Board activities and programs, highlighting several, including the summer YouthWorks program serving more than 600 youth in the region. He discussed the fact that the State is auditing past years of the YouthWorks program and he has been working with the regional vendors to respond to their requests for data and information. He also discussed the change in partners for the Connecting Activities program from the Blackstone Valley Education Foundation to the Blackstone Valley Hub for Business and Enterprise (BVHub). This aligns the work the BVHub does for the Board on YouthWorks with our Connecting Activities program.
- J. Turgeon then reviewed an outstanding item from the career center monitoring this past spring that appears to be uncompleted and therefore has risen to the level of advising the career center that they are on a corrective action probationary period to resolve the problems. The issue involves data compliance for enrollments in the

Veterans services program, and J. Turgeon discussed the fact that this was a finding brought forth by the State previously, so further follow up is warranted. He did note this was not a case of malfeasance or fraud, but merely seems to be about the documentation of their hard work. J. Ryan Weekes noted that she feels it may be a timing issue, as some of the requested data may have been entered but not yet appeared in the reviewer's latest review. J. Turgeon agreed this might very well be the case. She also noted that she had asked for a chance for the reviewer to meet with her management team, but this was rebuffed. J. Turgeon advised that a meeting following the career center's response would appear to be in order, to ensure both sides are on the same page. P. Gilbody asked about the wording of the file review report that accompanied the corrective action notification letter, highlighting that it referenced the Board requesting certain items or actions, and asked about the process used to develop these requests since it was not directly discussed by the Board. J. Turgeon replied that the reference is to Board staff, acting on behalf of the Board. P. Gilbody asked that the communication between the staff and the Board on matters such as this be improved and also asked that the language used in documents such as the report clarify when it is staff requesting actions and not the Board itself. J. Turgeon apologized for the lack of clarity on this and thought a follow up discussion of Board protocols on communication (and also when Board leaders may want to directly inform staff actions and when they would want to authorize the staff to act autonomously). He noted that this has generally gone smoothly, so hasn't been addressed in several years, and would be useful to revisit this topic.

- J. Turgeon then updated the committee on other Board programs, including the City-funded ARPA projects that will be coordinated through the Worcester Jobs Fund, which is housed administratively within the MCRWB. There will be 17 projects funded by area organizations and a part time admin assistant is being sought to help offset the administrative work of managing these contracts. He also noted that the Board will need to complete the 4-year plan mid-point check in with the State and revise the regional blueprint for this spring.
- J. Ryan Weekes then discussed other career center events and activities, highlighting there is only one current staff vacancy to be filled (the Access to Recovery Counselor position) and that she is keeping her admin assistant position vacant for the time being due to a watchful eye on FY24 State budget cuts to the career center's line item used to fund that position. She also made the committee aware of the status at 554 Main Street and some items being followed up on during the temporary occupancy permit, pending final project completion by the building owner and final inspection. She discussed the fact that the staff had to adjust programming back to remote or else move programs off-site while awaiting occupancy approval this past month. She thanks the City and Quinsigamond Community College for sharing space with her team. She also informed the committee about the upcoming job fair at Polar Park happening on September 8th.
- J. Turgeon then shared the date of the MA Workforce Summit, happening in Devens, MA on October 26th.
- J. Turgeon then asked the committee to think about any topics they would like to have on the October full Board meeting agenda and to let him know.

- The executive committee meeting will next meet on Friday, September 22, 2023 at 8:30am
- Hearing no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by: J. Turgeon