

MassHire Central Region Workforce Board
October 20, 2022; 8:30 AM
Via Webex – phone & online

Meeting Minutes

The following members/proxies were present: Paul Gilbody (Chair); Janice Ryan Weekes; Jose Perez; Joshua Froimson; Kevin Kuros; Kathy Rentsch (proxy for L. Pedraja); Alex Guardiola; Kathy Rentsch; Charla Hixson; Libis Bueno; Joyce Clemence; Dean Messier; Rick Laferriere; Kevin Gaugush; Colleen Lanza

Guests/Staff: J. Turgeon (MCRWB); Penny Doolittle (MassHire North Central Workforce Board)

Call to Order, Announcement of Quorum & Note of Conflict of Interest: P. Gilbody called the meeting to order at 8:34 AM, and asked the members if anyone wished to note any conflicts of interest on the agenda. No conflicts were noted. P. Gilbody then welcomed all the attendees and thanked them for their attendance. J. Turgeon then reviewed the attendance log.

Approval of April 21, 2022 MCRWB Meeting Minutes: Upon a motion and second from the attendees, the minutes were unanimously approved.

C. Hixson and J. Turgeon then gave an update on the region's summer YouthWorks program that served 396 participants in Worcester, Southbridge, and Milford. They presented detailed demographic data as well as program highlights. C. Hixson also informed attendees how YouthWorks aligns within the work of the Worcester Community Action Council's Jobs and Education Center (JEC) efforts overall.

P. Gilbody then introduced guest speaker Penny Doolittle, the regional "Market Maker" for the Central and North Central areas. In her role she helps identify and reach out to area employers to help inform them of available workforce grant resources. She then reviewed these resources to the attendees and asked them to help her connect with any employers that may want to explore these grants.

J. Weekes then discussed career center programming and operations, including her work to fill staff vacancies, which has been helped by changes in City policy regarding drug testing and new support for staff parking. She then updated the Board regarding the status of the new leases for the Board and Worcester Career Center, and the new move date in Worcester to 554 Main Street now anticipated to be in the winter, 2023. The move into the Southbridge Conference Center for the MassHire Southbridge Career Center is scheduled for the week of November 14th. J. Weekes also informed the attendees that there are some job fairs coming up, including one in Milford (which, she noted used to be a location for a physical career center before needing to close it for budget reasons). There is also an upcoming job fair in Southbridge next week, and a very large virtual job fair in partnership with all Masshire career centers, as well as career centers throughout New England. This large virtual event will take place on November 15 and 16.

J. Turgeon then highlighted some of the other Board programs and activities taking place, including the ongoing implementation of the regional blueprint, in partnership with the MassHire North Central Workforce Board, and the work being done to expand training in the region – including support for the MA Restaurant Association's grant application to help elevate front line staff in their establishments,

and a new region-wide CDL driver's program to train new class B and class A commercial drivers. He also noted the several partner grant applications that the Board is providing support for in the hopes of bring additional resources to the region.

J. Turgeon updated the Board know about current training opportunities and the need for help with recruitment of trainees, and invited meeting attendees to check the MassHire website training list regularly to stay informed of current projects (https://masshirecentral.com/resources/#_training).

J. Turgeon also highlighted that the City of Worcester will soon be releasing federal ARPA funding for job training. These funds will be reviewed by the Worcester Jobs Fund committee and staff for recommendations to the City Manager for final approval. Programs will be overseen by the WJF and Board staff.

J. Turgeon then noted for the Board that long-time MCRWB Youth Director, Ed Gagne, had recently received the prestigious state MassHire "Living MassHire Values" award for all his efforts.

P. Gilbody then invited to make announcements, and upon a motion, second, and unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:46am.

P. Gilbody thanked all for their attendance and reminded members that the next MCRWB full board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 19, 2023 at 8:30 – possibly held in-person or both in-person or via Webex virtual (details to be announced).

Respectfully drafted by, J. Turgeon; MCRWB