

MassHire Central Region Workforce Board  
Jan. 19, 2023; 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; Charla Hixson; Libis Bueno; Joyce Clemence; Rick Laferriere; Kevin Gaugush; Colleen Lanza; Kimberly Ingalls; Michael Williams; Amy Averback; Robert DelMastro; Jack Houliker; Rachel Monarrez; Robin Hooper; Kim White; Wendy Savary; Madison Wellman;

Guests/Staff: J. Turgeon (MCRWB); Eric Batista (Worcester City Manager); Tonja Mettlach (MA Workforce Association); Amber Polisher (Grafton Job Corps)

Call to Order, Announcement of Quorum & Note of Conflict of Interest: P. Gilbody called the meeting to order at 8:35 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 October 20, 2022 MCRWB Meeting Minutes: Upon a motion and second from the attendees, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Election of Chair; J. Turgeon presided over the election of the 2023 MCRWB Chair; J. Froimson nominated P. Gilbody and the nomination was seconded by K. Ingalls. Hearing no other nominations a motion was made to close nominations and elect P. Gilbody by J. Froimson, seconded by K. Kuros. The motion passed unanimously and J. Turgeon congratulated P. Gilbody and turned the meeting back over to him.

P. Gilbody then introduced the new City Manager, Eric D. Batista, who also serves as the region's Chief Elected Official under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). E. Batista discussed his appreciation for the work of the Board and its partners, as well as priority areas for his administration. He also highlighted the City's investment through the Worcester Jobs Fund and the recent release of federal ARPA funding for workforce development efforts. The City Manager also discussed the availability of open positions with the City and the hope Board members may refer candidates to these good jobs that help keep the City running on behalf of the community. P. Gilbody thanked City Manager Batista for attending the Board meeting, as well as his support of workforce initiatives and the work of the Board.

J. Turgeon then introduced Tonja Mettlach, the Executive Director of the MA Workforce Association, which serves as a professional association for workforce board and career center leaders across the Commonwealth. T. Mettlach gave an overview of the MWA's work and discussed the new MA Governor's transition and how it may impact the work of the Boards and career centers. She also discussed priority areas for the MWA that she hopes the new administration will support, including the need for more infrastructure support and resources for innovation efforts.

J. Turgeon then noted for the Board the need to update conflict of interest acknowledgment, informing attendees he will send further information and an acknowledgment form out to them following the meeting to be completed and returned to him. He also highlighted the MA online certification that all public board/staff must complete every two years is being updated and is not yet available.

J. Weekes then discussed career center programming and operations, including the recent hiring of two new staff to serve as “upskilling navigators” at the career centers, and vacancies for Head Clerk and Youth Services Coordinator positions. She also highlighted upcoming events, including a virtual job fair on January 26<sup>th</sup>. R. Monarrez asked J. Weekes to share event flyers and information with her office so that she could assist in promoting them to Worcester Public School parents.

J. Weekes 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 that now anticipated to be in July, 2023. The move into the Southbridge Conference Center for the MassHire Southbridge Career Center was completed the week of November 14<sup>th</sup> and was the site for a staff holiday gathering and professional development event soon after opening. J. Weekes also informed the attendees that the career center is working with the Sheriff’s office to increase support for inmates as they prepare for release and after they reenter the community. She is also working on a program to help recruit and prepare people interested in becoming a Correctional Officer for the MA Department of Corrections. Additionally, the Career Center recently sent several staff for training as certified Bounce (soft skills) training facilitators – which will increase the capacity to offer this training to customers. Lastly, J. Weekes informed the Board that the Career Center is also working with the City and area community-based organizations to expand their reach.

J. Turgeon then highlighted some of the other Board programs and activities taking place, including efforts to support additional student hands-on paid internships/work-based Learning, the upcoming summer YouthWorks program planning, and regional training programs in healthcare and manufacturing, as well as a new region-wide CDL driver’s program to train new class B and class A commercial drivers that was awarded to the Board. 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 then highlighted several available training programs that are currently recruiting, and reminded the Board meeting attendees to check the MassHire website training list regularly to stay informed of current projects ([https://masshirecentral.com/resources/#\\_training](https://masshirecentral.com/resources/#_training)).

P. Gilbody thanked all for their attendance and reminded members that the next MCRWB full board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 20, 2023 at 8:30am. He asked members if they would prefer to meet in person and the general sense was that virtual meetings should continue unless otherwise prohibited by state open meeting requirements.

P. Gilbody then invited to make announcements, and upon a motion, second, and unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:53am.

*Respectfully drafted by, J. Turgeon; MCRWB*