

MassHire Central Region Workforce Board
January 16, 2025; 8:30 AM
Via MS Teams – phone & online

Meeting Minutes

The following members/proxies were present: Paul Gilbody (Chair; Milford Federal Bank); Joshua Froimson (AbbVie); Sonia Watkins (proxy for Janice Ryan Weekes; MassHire Central Career Centers); Robert DelMastro (MA Small Business Development Center Network); Jack Houlker (MA Rehabilitation Commission); Robin Hooper (The Community Builders); Kimberly White (QCC); Kelly Aiken (UMass Memorial); David Garvin (Greater Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce); Sherri Greene Pitcher (Notre Dame Academy); Kevin Kuros (MA Office of Business Development); Richard LaFerriere (CVS Health); Joyce Clemence (MA Department of Transitional Assistance); Jose Perez (Central MA AFL-CIO); Nicole Rendon (Worcester Housing Authority)

Guests/Staff: J. Turgeon (MCRWB); Cole Angley (MA Workforce Association); Bruce Mendelsohn (MCRWB)

Call to Order, Announcement of Quorum & Note of Conflict of Interest: P. Gilbody called the meeting to order at 8:33 AM, and asked the members if anyone wished to note any conflicts of interest on the agenda. None were noted. P. Gilbody then welcomed all the attendees and thanked them for their attendance. J. Turgeon then reviewed the attendance log.

Approval of the October 17, 2024 MCRWB Meeting Minutes: J. Froimson made a motion to approve the minutes and this was seconded by R. Hooper. The minutes were then unanimously approved.

P. Gilbody turned the agenda over to J. Turgeon who discussed the role of the Board Chair position and called for nominations for the Chair for calendar year 2025. J. Froimson nominate P. Gilbody and then after hearing no other nominations, a motion was made by J. Froimson to close nominations and vote upon approval for P. Gilbody. The motion was seconded by R. Hooper and was then approved unanimously.

P. Gilbody then introduced the first guest, Mr. Cole Angley, the Executive Director of the MA Workforce Association (MWA). Cole discussed the role of the MWA and then discussed recent events in Washington DC and the status of the reauthorization for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) that governs the work of the federal workforce system, including local board and one-stop career centers. This Act was to be included in the bipartisan spending resolution that was crafted but ultimately rejected in favor of a slimmed down version, which took out the reauthorization of WIOA, so at this point it remains to be seen if it will be a priority of the new Congress to take up reauthorization. Cole also gave his understanding of the trends occurring with the start of the new Trump administration as well as issues that are front and center at the state level, such as use of the millionaire's tax funding. K. Aiken asked about the potential for additional changes to the apprenticeship designs, as the previous Trump administration had done. It is unknown at this time if apprenticeships will be revamped by the administration again. K. Kuros noted the hope that employee ownership center funding will remain in the new administration as well through the WORK Act.

P. Gilbody then introduced Mr. Bruce Mendelsohn from the MCRWB, who reviewed local and statewide labor market trends, including the industries that have seen growth and anticipated hiring needs moving forward. He also highlighted existing grant training programs that he is recruiting for, including a training for COMPTIA + certification, as well as Information Technology training programs available through a grant through Clark University.

P. Gilbody then turned the agenda over to J. Turgeon for an update regarding Board activities and programming. J. Turgeon then highlighted several Board efforts, including the recent submission of the revised regional WIOA partner MOU to state officials, implementation this winter/spring of the YouthWorks year-round program and planning begun for the YouthWorks program that will happen in the summer. He also informed attendees of the new Worcester Jobs Fund Director hiring, Ms. Anh Dao, who was previously the WJF program assistant. J. Turgeon then gave an overview of grant applications that the Board has submitted, including for programming to support English language and career training to state emergency shelter residents. He also gave an overview to the members of the project grant proposals that the MCRWB has supported for other organizations over the past quarter that would help provide career-related resources to youth, adults, and employers in our region.

Sonia Watkins then gave an update regarding the career center's activities, including, the status of three staff position vacancies, the conversion of career center and Board computers to laptop/docking units and to SharePoint electronic filing. She also highlighted the work the career centers are doing with immigrants and migrants in the area, as well as a new partnership for youth career services with the multi-school district Central MA Collaborative. Lastly, she informed the attendees of several upcoming career center events, such as virtual job fairs, local hiring events, including one for the US postal Service.

J. Turgeon then reminded members about the state conflict of interest online system portal and need to complete their certification as a Board member at least every two years. He then reviewed a few area training programs that are actively recruiting applicants.

P. Gilbody then invited members to share any announcements they may have.

P. Gilbody then thanked the attendees and reminded them that the next MCRWB full board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 17, 2025 at 8:30am.

P. Gilbody then invited members to make a motion to adjourn, and after a motion, a second and unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:37am

Respectfully drafted by, J. Turgeon; MCRWB