

MassHire Central Region Workforce Board
Executive Committee
June 18, 2021; 8:30 AM
Conducted via webex

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Paul Gilbody, Joshua Froimson; Jennifer Almeida, Libis Bueno, Janice Ryan Weekes
Staff: Jeff Turgeon

- P. Gilbody welcomed everyone to the Webex meeting and asked everyone to review the agenda and note any conflicts of interest. None were noted.
- The committee reviewed the May 21, 2021 minutes and a motion was made and seconded to accept the meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.
- J. Turgeon discussed the budget status, noting the increase in funds coming federally of approx.. 15% due to the formula that uses unemployment figures from last spring (which were very high due to the pandemic), and State funding is also up with strong local legislative support.
- J. Turgeon then gave several updates to the committee regarding programs, including news of the Year Round YouthWorks program is winding down while staff ramp up for the summer YouthWorks program, which will be increased to serve more than 400 youth this year, including youth in Milford through a partnership with the Milford Youth Center (along with Southbridge and Worcester). He also noted a new CDL training grant of \$178 to serve people returning from incarceration, and a \$375,000 grant to support regional healthcare training (in partnership with Mount Wachusett Community College, Heywood Hospital, Worcester Public Schools Night Life, QCC, and a human services employer coalition project led by Open Sky). J. Turgeon also noted a Worcester Jobs Fund led program for computer coding called Coding Dojo will be happening. L. Bueno volunteered to help design program outreach and selection and J. Turgeon will connect him with Kelsey Lamoureux as a follow up. Lastly, J. Turgeon informed the committee that the Future of Work grant – which includes online training in medical office, has yielded more than 300 trainees.
- J. Ryan Weekes discussed the planned reopening of the career center to in-person services, noting the challenges involved, including working with officials to hire security staff, offering unemployment claim navigation support, and managing both the staff that work for the State and those that work for the City. It is anticipated that all staff will be back in the office by July 12th and the following week will start in-person services by appointment only, with a return to walk-in in-person services slated for Sept. 7th. J. Ryan Weekes noted they will be promoting the return dates to the public and the committee recommended use of the texting capabilities the career center has.
- J. Turgeon then informed the committee of several administrative tasks underway, including the drafting of the region’s four year WIOA Plan (which ;largely melds the

regional blueprint and board strategic plan into a new format); as well as the draft WIOA Partner memorandum of understanding that outlines how the partners work together to serve shared customers – a draft of the agreement has been submitted for state review and signatures from the various regional partners. He also highlighted the recently conducted state fiscal audit that contained zero findings and several best practices the staff use. He thanks Carlene Godfrey and her fiscal team for their continued good work. J. Turgeon also noted the state certification of local boards has been delayed until later in the fall/winter.

- J. Ryan Weekes also reported that the Worcester Career Center/MCRWB lease procurement is nearing completion and the City is anticipated to make the final selection soon – at which time the MCRWB Executive Committee will be invited to help review the proposed facility layout options.
- J. Turgeon discussed the proposed agenda items for the July full Board meeting including a review of the Board and career centers’ diversity, inclusion and equity efforts – perhaps in partnership with a presentation by state officials that have been working on this issue as well. He also noted that the summer YouthWorks program update could be included. P. Gilbody asked that the new WIOA Operator be invited and introduced at the meeting as well.
- L. Bueno then brought up the topic of employers having a hard time finding candidates and the reasons that may be driving this, including the extended increased unemployment benefits. All agreed this was a major economic issue and J. Almeida noted the restaurant industry has been very hard hit by this as many people do not wish to return to jobs in this field that pay less and often do not offer benefits. As a result, she said some employers are increasing pay and benefits to try and recruit more candidates. J. Turgeon suggested this be a topic for the fall Board meeting if it is still an issue then.
- P. Gilbody then asked the committee if they wished to hold our summer board meeting and next Executive Committee meeting virtually, and they agreed to continue virtual meetings for the summer.
- The executive committee meeting will next meet on Friday, August 20, 2021 at 8:30am
- Hearing no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by: J. Turgeon