

**MassHire Central Region Workforce Board**  
**Executive Committee**  
**December 20, 2024; 8:30 AM**  
**Conducted via MS Teams**

**Meeting Minutes**

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

- P. Gilbody welcomed attendees and J. Turgeon apologized for being a bit late and joining the meeting via his phone as he was unexpectedly on the road. Jeff then gave an overview of the Federal-funding situation occurring in Washington relating to the Continuing Resolution, which also included a provision that reauthorized the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) that provides the framework for the workforce board. He noted that the reauthorized bill does have some new provisions in it that are not perceived by local areas as positive, but that it may be better than a bill to come out of the next Congress, so the local system partners are all waiting to see what will be decided in Washington.
- P. Gilbody then accepted a motion to accept the November 15, 2024 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.
- J. Turgeon then updated the attendees about Board activities, including the ongoing work to support getting migrants in the emergency shelter system into jobs, including a new \$300K grant to support ESOL plus career training in healthcare provided by Quinsigamond Community College and Mount Wachusett Community College. He stated the Board is also waiting on a \$400k grant application for additional ESOL plus work readiness training led by several area groups that serve New Americans, and another grant application that will soon be submitted to support ESOL plus career technical training in healthcare, construction, warehouse work, and culinary/food service.
- J. Turgeon then noted work continues on area training in Healthcare Hub and Behavioral Health Hub grant programs, along with CDL, and projects through the Worcester Jobs Fund. He also highlighted that the Board was recently awarded \$400K in funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that fund job training in hazardous materials handling. Along with these projects, the Board is also working on a healthcare-Information Technology grant and has a request in to get additional funding that would provide paid work experience for graduates from the healthcare IT training programs.
- J. Turgeon also discussed with the Board will be moving away from using social media platform X and setting up a new Bluesky account. Among the reasons for the transition is the introduction of a fee on X to set up an automatic feed to the Board's website

homepage for X posts, and the fact that the platform has taken a decidedly negative turn in recent months that does not reflect the values of the Board.

- J. Ryan Weekes then highlighted several career center related items, including a successful recent all-staff training conducted at the School Yard in West Boylston which included a workshop on stress relief by the City's Emergency Assistance program (EAP) provider, AllOne Health. Along with this, she will be having a career center training in the near future for career center staff on creating a positive culture, and a training for senior leaders on how to recognize employees struggling with addiction will be held in early January. She also noted they are working with the MA Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) to have a staff person be outstation at least once a week in the career center to assist clients that have challenges with their unemployment claims. This is a badly needed service and J. Ryan Weekes has expressed to state DUA officials the need to have an experience staff person be put in place so that they will be able to address the issues that claimants have. Besides having a DUA representative at the career center, they now also have a Quinsigamond Community College rep that comes to the center weekly to promote the free classes available for qualified MA residents at the community colleges.
- J. Ryan Weekes also informed the committee that the career center now has an active presence in the Worcester Public Library that will help them create a safer environment as more staff will be present there. She also discussed the continuation of virtual job fairs and the successful one held in December, along with the next one set for January 22<sup>nd</sup>. She next discussed the migration of staff to the use of docking stations and laptops that will ease remote access of secure documents, along with the transition from a shared internal data folder to the use of SharePoint. Both items have been done under the coordination of the City's Department of Information Technology (DOIT).
- J. Ryan Weekes then let the committee know that the interviews are underway for student interns at North High School, and that she is helping coordinate the local MLK Jr. Breakfast on January 20th at Assumption College.
- Lastly, she noted that there is an all staff potluck holiday lunch being held today.
- J. Turgeon then informed the committee that he is working with the new Worcester Jobs Fund Director to fill the vacant WJF Assistant position, and that the school to career connecting activities program will again support a SKILLS program at South HS in Worcester that combines career readiness, financial literacy workshops with their ski club. He also discussed the continued efforts to research Artificial Intelligence tools with the career center and feedback from exec committee member (and subject matter expert) Libis Bueno.
- The committee then discussed the full board meeting agenda items for the January meeting, that will include the annual election of Board Chair, along with a discussion of the new Trump administration's agenda by MA Workforce Association director Cole Angley and a presentation on labor market trends by the Board's Bruce Mendelsohn. If members suggest other agenda items, they should reach out to Jeff and Paul.
- The executive committee meeting will next meet on Friday, February 21, 2025 at 8:30am via MS Teams.

- Hearing no other business, P. Gilbody and J. Turgeon wished everyone happy holidays and the meeting was adjourned.

*Respectfully submitted by: J. Turgeon*