

Worcester Jobs Fund Oversight Committee

January 23, 2020

10:00 a.m.

IBEW Local 96, 242 Mill St. Worcester, MA 01602

Meeting Minutes

WJF Oversight Committee Attendance: Karen Pelletier, Maritza Cruz, Fred Taylor, Jennifer Brunelle, and Isabel Gonzalez-Webster.

WJF Staff: Kelsey Lamoureux and Theodora Appiah.

Guests: Peter Dunn, Ethan Brown, Roberta Brien, Linda Cavaioli, Steven Lambros, Nina Nova-Duran, Kara Smith, Harry Kokkinis and James Chacharone

- The meeting was called to order after a quorum was established.

Discussion with YWCA:

- All attendees introduced themselves, their positions and their organizations.
- K. Lamoureux provided a summary of the mission, purpose, goals, and trainings of the Worcester Job Fund.
- L. Cavaioli presented the mission, services, and impact of the YWCA of Central MA. L. Cavaioli provided a detailed explanation of the goals and financing for the YWCA renovation project. The project will increase the facility's capacity to serve the community with updated health and wellness facilities, improved childcare classrooms, and additional housing for domestic violence survivors. L. Cavaioli emphasized the commitment to a diverse, union construction workforce on the project with goals of 15.3% of people of color and 6.9% women.
- F. Taylor acknowledged YWCA's success with outreach to underrepresented groups for employment in living-wage jobs.
- E. Brown inquired about the average length of stay for individuals in the Transitional Housing program and the impact the renovation will have on this specific program. R. Brien and L. Cavaioli shared details of the program, including the required sliding scale for expenses and private entrance that will be created through this project.
- F. Taylor inquired about the time it took to complete the planning process and which aspect was most difficult. L. Cavaioli described the 5 year process required to secure funding and consensus for the project.
- K. Pelletier noted that YWCA's employment goals align with the Worcester Jobs Funds mission and suggested a pipeline be formed to connect students from the Building Pathways Pre-Apprenticeship and the Tradeswomen Tuesday programs with construction opportunities. K. Lamoureux offered to connect with the construction leadership on the project.
- E. Brown welcomed feedback on the YWCA's experience with the City's process. L. Cavaioli and R. Brien expressed appreciation for the changes that have been made in the process. L. Cavaioli

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described logistical challenges with having the YWCA construction project directly next to Library's construction project in such close proximity.

Discussion with Table Talk Pies/ Chacharone Properties:

- All attendees introduced themselves, their positions and their organizations.
- K. Lamoureux provided a summary of the mission, purpose, goals, and trainings of the Worcester Job Fund.
- H. Kokkinis expressed appreciation for the ongoing collaboration between Table Talk Pies, Chacharone Properties, and workforce development and community partners.
- P. Dunn provided an overview of the area proposed in the project and noted that the new facility would be an economic boost for the area and would clean up a brownfield site that is in close proximity to vulnerable populations. H. Kokkinis provided a visual presentation of the current parcels and a mockup of the proposed building. H. Kokkinis recognized Chacharone Properties for their assistance in making the project possible and their recent support in creating a 30,000 sq. ft. freezer and an additional dry storage facility nearby. H. Kokkinis described Table Talk Pies' desire to remain in Worcester to support the 70% of their employees that live in Worcester, with 47% of them within a mile of the new facility. J. Chacharone shared details on the construction of the facility and the use of highly efficient and environmentally friendly materials and installations to complete the design of the building. H. Kokkinis and J. Chacharone provided a summary of the timeline and expected date of completion for the project.
- M. Cruz acknowledged appreciation for Table Talk Pies' commitment to remaining in Worcester. M. Cruz inquired about the number of workers at Table Talk Pies that are seasonal and/or temporary. H. Kokkinis stated that approximately 100 employees are seasonal and/or temporary. H. Kokkinis noted that The Little Store will remain in Kelly Sq. to honor the family's presence in the neighborhood.
- I. Gonzalez-Webster inquired about the name of the temporary agency used by Table Talk Pies and described common challenges for workers who are paid through temporary agencies, including wage theft and worker abuse. N. Nova-Duran acknowledged I. Gonzalez-Webster's concerns stated that Table Talk Pies has made it a priority to shift more of the workforce to permanent status and has gone from 170 permanent employees to 300 permanent employees in recent years. N. Nova-Duran also stated that the temporary agency utilized by Table Talk Pies, Personnel Staffing Benefits Solutions, has set up an on-site presence at Table Talk Pies to improve communication and worker experience. H. Kokkinis stated that PSB provides fair working conditions for all employees.
- J. Brunelle suggested forming a collaboration between Table Talk Pies and the Adult Learning Center as a pipeline for interested students.
- F. Taylor inquired about the average wage for factory floor employees. H. Kokkinis stated that \$17/hr. is the average wage for the factory floor, excluding management, but with the bonus incentives this could rise to an average of \$18/hr. H. Kokkinis stated that employees begin at \$0.50 above minimum wage and will make 125% of minimum wage within 2 years of employment. N. Nova-Duran stated that Table Talk Pies have supported students who pursue ESOL and provide financial assistance, when possible.

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- K. Lamoureux suggested that Table Talk Pies connect with the Business Engagement Services Team at the MassHire Worcester Career Center to discuss local job fairs and other on-site recruitment services offered by the Career Center.

Approval of December 20, 2019 Meeting Minutes:

- The meeting minutes from December 20, 2019 at 242 Mill Street were reviewed and M. Cruz a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by I. Gonzalez-Webster and unanimously approved.

Economic Development Updates:

- P. Dunn highlighted on the impact of the project for the community in the Main South Worcester area and the benefits there will be for the community.
- I. Gonzalez-Webster asked for more information about PSB's employment history. P. Dunn offered to look into their history with the State Attorney General's Office.
- K. Lamoureux suggested providing Table Talk Pies with a list of community contacts to help them further develop a sustainable pipeline of employees to consider for direct hires.
- J. Brunelle noted that despite the low wages, these positions can offer individuals opportunities to build their resume and improve their employability for the future.
- F. Taylor noted that the Ad Hoc Monitoring Committee is planning to visit the monitoring meeting for UMBA on February 19th to learn best practices and will have their next monthly meeting on February 20th.

WJF Director Report:

- K. Lamoureux provided brief updates recruitment for upcoming programs including Clinical Medical Assistant and Building Pathways Pre-Apprenticeship program.

Other Items/Announcements:

- K. Pelletier opened the floor for additional announcements, but none were presented.

Adjourn:

- A motion to adjourn was made by K. Pelletier, was seconded by I. Gonzalez-Webster, and was unanimously approved.

The next monthly meeting will be February 27, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.