



MassHire State Workforce Board Meeting
Thursday, March 16, 2023
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Virtual Meeting (Via WebEx)

Meeting Minutes

Members Present (logged in):

Jennifer Almeida, Anne Broholm, James Cassetta, Jim Chilton, Pam Eddinger, Pamela Everhart, Jessyca Feliciano (arrived late), Rainer Gawlick, Maddrey Goode, Lauren Jones, Randall Lyons, John Mann, Juliette Mayers, Radhames Nova, Jerald Parisella, Sherri Pitcher (arrived late), Joanne Pokaski, Elizabeth Skidmore, Patrick Tutwiler, Juan Vega (arrived late) Kate Walsh, Toni Wolf

Members Absent:

Jesse Brown, Sherry Dong, Maria Ferreira-Bedard, Warren Pepicelli, Ray Wrobel

Guests and Staff

Christine Abrams, John Afonso, Lorraine Albert, Elissa Alvarez, David Baker, Charles Bennett, Heather Boulger, Andrea Bresnahan, Michele Campbell, Inez Canada, Dave Cruise, Marisa de la Paz, Italo Fini, Patricia Garcia, Diane Hurley, Victoria Ireton, Jennifer James, Constance Martin, Kim McLaughlin, Antonia Ortiz-Grace, Joan Phillips, Carmen Rodriguez, Cheryl Scott, Karen Shack, Sacha Stadhard

Welcome & Introductions

Joanne Pokaski called the meeting to order. She welcomed new Board members: Jennifer Almeida, Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Lauren Jones, Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler, and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kate Walsh. Carmen Rodriguez from the U.S. Department of Labor was also recognized as being in attendance. Ms. Pokaski reviewed the meeting agenda, and then recognized Cheryl Scott's impending departure as Executive Director of the Board and thanked her for her years of service to the Board.

Cheryl Scott thanked the Board for the warm send-off. She then reminded the Board that the next meeting on June 15th will be in person and noted the importance of quorum. She announced that the [FY2022 MassHire Report](#) was sent to the legislature in March as part of a requirement of the state budget's Career Center Line Item. There is another report due to the state legislature in June as part of the Economic Development bill that will require an analysis of the workforce training programs under the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, including programs administered through [CommCorp](#). The Board's MassHire

Performance Committee will be engaged to support development of this report. Ms. Scott concluded by noting that many Board members were re-appointed near the close of the Baker administration and to reach out to her if they have not received a re-appointment letter.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Joanne Pokaski asked for any changes to the meeting minutes from the December 8, 2022 meeting; none were raised. Ms. Pokaski called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Jim Cassetta made the motion to accept the minutes, the motion was seconded by Rainer Gawlick, and a roll call vote was made. All members voted in favor of accepting the meeting minutes, except the following members who abstained: Lauren Jones, John Mann, Juliette Mayers, Elizabeth Skidmore, Patrick Tutwiler, and Kate Walsh.

Reference document:

- *2022.12.08 MSWB Meeting Minutes.docx*

Workforce Development Update

Secretary Lauren Jones introduced herself and shared more about her background. She then provided a brief economic update, noting the downward trend in Commonwealth's unemployment rate and growth in the size of the labor force and the labor force participation rate. All industry sectors in Massachusetts, except Financial Services, gained jobs with the largest gains in education, health service, trade and transportation, and leisure and hospitality.

The Workforce Skills Cabinet (WSC) is continuing under the Healey-Driscoll administration. The WSC is actively identifying shared priorities and building a collaborative workforce development strategy across Housing and Economic Development, Education, and Workforce Development while also building on the Regional Planning Teams strategy.

The Healey-Driscoll's FY24 budget focuses on affordability, equity, and competitiveness. \$112 million is proposed under the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development's secretariat, including a \$4M increase in Registered Apprenticeship, and continued support for the MassHire Career Centers, the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, the Career Technical Initiative, and YouthWorks.

Secretary Jones also provided an update on the Employment Modernization & Transformation project to modernize the Unemployment Insurance system. Employer registrations and tax revenue management under the new system is expected to be deployed June 2023 and communications to key stakeholders about change management processes are now underway.

Secretary Walsh introduced herself and shared more about her background, mentioning that she is in her first few weeks as Secretary of Health and Human Services. She noted a few areas of focus early on in her tenure including burnout and fatigue of the healthcare workforce, the need to upskill in the field and down regulate where possible, and making the social safety net

a trampoline to a life out of poverty. She is inspired by commitment and engagement of the health and human services staff and looks forward to partnership with workforce development.

Reference document: JONES_MassHireBoardMeeting_2023.16.03_v2.pptx

MassReconnect Overview

Secretary Tutwiler introduced himself to the Board and presented an overview of the MassReconnect program proposed in Governor Healey's FY24 budget. The \$20M budget proposal will cover the cost for all Massachusetts residents aged 25 and older who have not earned a college degree or industry credential to attend a Massachusetts community college. Funding would cover the costs of tuition, fees, books and supplies and fund Community Colleges to provide career and wraparound support services to students. Secretary Tutwiler noted that the Executive Office of Education is building out guidance and a deployment strategy that will be shared with the Board when available. He expects there will be opportunity to partner with the workforce system and other stakeholders to maximize reach and impact of the program.

Secretary Tutwiler also reviewed other education-related highlights in the Governor's FY24 budget such as support for the Student Opportunity Act, MASSGrant Plus, Early College and Innovation Pathways, Community College SUCCESS fund and support for teachers with emergency licensure to get their provisional license.

Reference material: TUTWILER_MassHire Board Meeting 3.15.23.pptx

A Board member asked about how the recent collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) will impact Massachusetts. Secretary Jones responded that Housing and Economic Development Secretary Hao is taking the lead for the Governor's cabinet in connecting with the legislature, Massachusetts' congressional delegation, and business and industry leaders in recognizing impact of SVB on Massachusetts, such as charter schools and temples, given that SVB previously acquired Boston Private Bank. Massachusetts workers will be impacted, so the Healey-Driscoll administration is actively involved and closely monitoring the situation as it develops, and thinking of contingencies to catch the impacted workers.

Workforce Development Priorities

The Board engaged in a discussion on the workforce issues and topics that are most critical for Massachusetts to address. Board members noted such issues as:

- Building the workforce inclusive of people with disabilities, who, as a group, experience high rates of unemployment compared to other populations;
- Connecting with employers, particularly small employers, so they are aware of the workforce system's programs and services;

- Recognizing and mitigating the opportunity cost for people to participate in training, and then ensuring there is a job at the end so there is a payoff for investing time and energy. MassReconnect will be helpful, especially in reducing educational debt;
- Focusing on building opportunities to middle skills jobs that offer great careers;
- Building a system of lifelong learning with stackable credentials toward middle income jobs that don't require a college degree. Make sure there are on-ramps and off-ramps to career paths based on transferable skills. CTI and Chapter 74 programs are great pathways for young people to get started in these careers.
- Building the workforce starting at a young age, like middle school, as well as align early talent pipeline development programs to reduce duplication and streamline the employer experience. This could be effective for fields with critical labor shortages, like healthcare;
- Supporting workers with wrap around services, including mental health;
- Building talent pipelines for key industries such as healthcare, tech, and cyber security;
- Focus on gateway cities, not just Boston's high-tech economy.

Secretary Jones summarized her key takeaways and reflections on the discussion, noting the need to focus on both short- and long-term needs, and having a statewide perspective while keeping equity at the core.

WIOA State Plan Overview

Jennifer James briefed the Board on the four-year WIOA State Plan and the Board's charge to develop the next WIOA State Plan by March 2024. She reviewed the key elements and accomplishments from the previous 2020 WIOA State Plan and outlined the proposed timeline and process to develop the 2024 WIOA State Plan.

Reference document: 3_16_23_WIOA State Plan Overview v2.pptx

Berkshire Region Overview

Heather Boulger provided an overview of the MassHire Berkshire region, noting the strengths of the region including highly engaged employers and strong collaborations and partnerships among workforce, education, economic development and social services agencies. The MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board has employed a robust workforce development strategy by engaging employers to gauge their needs, focusing on recruitment and retention strategies, and marketing through a several avenues. MassHire Berkshire has programs for youth and adults focusing on the key industries identified in their regional planning blueprint such as manufacturing & engineering, hospitality & culinary arts, and education and childcare.

Reference document: BOULGER_MassHireBerkshire presentation 3-23

The meeting adjourned at 11:32 a.m.