**Massachusetts Workforce Development Board Meeting**

Tuesday, December 5th, 2017

UMass Lowell Inn & Conference Center

50 Warren Street

Lowell, MA 01852

***Members Present:***

*Secretary Rosalyn Acosta, Aixa Beauchamp, Joanne Berwald, Anne Broholm, Jesse Brown, Tricia Canavan, Donna Cupelo, Shery Dong, Senator Eileen Donoghue, Pam Eddinger, Cassius Johnson, Robert LePage, Susan Mailman, Juliette Mayers, Jeffrey McCue, Beth Mitchell, Joanne Pokaski, Elizabeth Skidmore, Juan Vega, Ray Wrobel*

***Members Absent:***

*Gerard Burke, James Cassetta, Kathleen Cullen-Cote, Mayor Kimberley Driscoll, Eric Hagopian, John Mann, Warren Pepicelli, Mayor Dan Rivera, Representative Joseph Wagner, Beth Williams*

***Staff and Guests:***

*Ashley Armstrong (MA Department of Transitional Assistance), Bruce Bergwall (Pearson), Greg Bunn (Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development), Peter Farkas (Greater Lowell Workforce Development Board), Maureen Fitzpatrick (Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board), Jennifer James Price (Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development), Staci Landress (Watermark), Louise Lynch (MA Department of Transitional Assistance), Bill McKinney (Department of Labor Standards), Kathie Mainzer (The Workforce Solutions Group), Ken Messina (Department of Career Services), David Muldrew (Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development), Jessica Muradian (Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development), Kevin Murphy (City of Lowell), Shannon Norton Calles (Career Center of Lowell), Rory O’Hanlon (Office of Chairman Joseph Wagner), Arlene Parquette (UMass Lowell), Charlie Pearce (Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development), Maegan Pedemonti (Wat Finders), Nathan Pham (Verizon New England), Kimberly Rowe- Cummings (MA Department of Transitional Assistance), Sunny Schwartz (Metro North Regional Employment Board), Cheryl Scott (Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development), Cynthia Smith (Element Care), Ethan Snow (New England Joint Board UNITE HERE), Sacha Stadhard (Department of Career Services), Alice Sweeney (Department of Career Services), Earl Tate (Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development), Michael Tith (UMass Lowell) Jeffrey Turgeon (Central Mass Workforce Investment Board), Olga Yulikova (Exec. Office of Elder Affairs), Marina Zhavoronkova (Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development)*

**Welcome & Introductions**

Donna Cupelo called the meeting to order, and welcomed board members and guests. All members and guests introduced themselves.

Senator Eileen Donoghue presented an update from the Commonwealth’s House of Representatives, and the 1st Middlesex District. The House passed a bill to provide the Workforce Competitive Trust Fund (WCTF) a sustainable and predictable source of annual funding by allowing up to 5% of the Workforce Training Fund to support the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund. In 2016, the Joint Committee on Economic Development crafted a $1 billion economic development bill which included $500 million for MassWorks grants for infrastructure improvements. In October 2017, Tyngsboro and Lowell received MassWorks grants. In Lowell, they are seeking to improve infrastructure in Downtown Lowell, including funds to UTEC to support 25 jobs. Tyngsboro is also using the funds to complete infrastructure projects to make significant changes in their area. In October 2017, Senator Donoghue, City Manager Kevin Murphy, and Lieutenant Governor Karen Polito were invited to open the global headquarters of Kronos in Lowell, a company with over 40 million users of their products worldwide. This new development showcases state of the art facilities in Lowell as well as represents the future of the city of Lowell.

City Manager Murphy shared that a key policy of his administration is to attract a new businesses or encourage existing businesses to expand; in both cases business incentives are predicated upon creation of local jobs. Kronos is an example of companies that took residence in Lowell due to the tax and financing agreement offered to them. Kronos is investing $56 million in renovations, which will create construction jobs. They are bringing 1300 jobs with them to the city of Lowell, and part of the agreement stipulates that they must create 400 new jobs within 5 years. MACOM is a manufacturing facility in Lowell; they almost relocated to Southern New Hampshire but based on incentives that the Commonwealth and the City of Lowell could offer, they are building a $15 million expansion. They are predicted to create 47 new jobs as part of the agreement, retaining 373 employees in the city of Lowell, and expand hiring in construction. Mr. Murphy provided additional examples of companies locating or expanding operations to Lowell, creating more jobs and strengthening the local economy.

Donna Cupelo introduced Arlene Parquette from the University of Massachusetts Lowell (UMass Lowell). UMass Lowell has been recently recognized as the 4th highest ranking in women-led business institution in the Commonwealth based on the work of the Chancellor Jacqueline Maloney and her leadership team. UMass Lowell is also consistently ranked among the top 5 fastest growing and fastest rising institutions. The institution has been able to double their student enrollment and have made investments to provide more resources for students, such as 14 new buildings on campus and more faculty members. UMass Lowell also believes in experiential learning, having the students join the workforce as soon as possible to help them build their professional skills. UMass Lowell has one the strongest and longest-standing co-op and internship programs. UMass Lowell is also contributing to the local eco-system through start up accelerators. The university is not only advancing innovation and technology through the startup companies, but strengthening the workforce through businesses hiring the students for co-ops and internships. UMass Lowell is looking forward to building more programs and work with the city, the state, and industry partners to build and enrich the experiences of the students.

Ray Wrobel, Chair of the Greater Lowell Workforce Development Board provided an update on the year-round YouthWorks program which received $75,000 from Commonwealth Corporation to train low income youth for various careers such as certified nursing assistant and culinary arts. The Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC) is a celebrated collaboration of the workforce development boards for greater Lowell, Metro North and North Shore, 7 Career Centers, 3 Community Colleges and several technical high schools. Through NAMC, many Greater Lowell residents entered training in advanced manufacturing at Middlesex Community College and Greater Lowell Tech. Mr. Wrobel also reports that the Career Center of Lowell has developed job fairs, collectively attended by over 100 employers and about nearly 700 job seekers.

**Review and Approval of the Meeting Minutes**

After noting that a quorum was present, Donna Cupelo asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the Massachusetts Workforce Development Board meetings in March, June, and September 2017. The motion was made, and passed unanimously.

**Workforce Development Update**

Secretary Rosalin Acosta shared that the Massachusetts unemployment rate is at 3.7%. There are 200,000 job openings and only 150,000 people looking for work. Secretary Acosta expressed her concerns about employers hiring candidates through word of mouth, noting that most of the time people tend to hire people that look like themselves. She challenged employers to reconsider their hiring practices and be more inclusive. Secretary Acosta also challenged employers to re-consider their job requirements. For example, many employers require a Bachelors degree, but perhaps employers can be more open-minded and consider candidates that are in the process of earning their Bachelors degree who may be qualified for the position. Secretary Acosta mentioned the progress of the Workforce Skills Cabinet’s Regional Planning initiative and emphasizes that it is a collaborative effort and an evolutionary process. Secretary Acosta also provided an update on the apprenticeship expansion and the continuous work that is happening to diversify the industries and the candidates that are taking advantage of the of the apprenticeship model. Secretary Acosta also updated the Board on the Learn to Earn program; a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued asking for proposals that address the cliff effects for individuals that are on public assistance. 30 proposals have been received and 5 will be recommended for funding to Governor Baker. Secretary Acosta also provided an update on the people of Puerto Rico who are immigrating in significant numbers to areas in the Commonwealth such as Holyoke and Springfield in the aftermath of hurricane Maria. The Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development, the Department of Transitional Assistance, the career centers and family resource centers are working collaboratively to make sure all new residents from Puerto Rico are getting the assistance that they need. Finally, Secretary Acosta mentioned that the entire Massachusetts Unemployment Insurance system is now in the cloud. We are the first in the country to accomplish this technological feat. In the coming months, the Department of Industrial Accidents and the Department of Labor Standards will also be working toward making same migration to the cloud as well.

**Labor Market and Workforce Information Committee Presentation**

Joanne Pokaski presented the Labor Market and Workforce Information’s Deep Dive on the Information Technology (IT) industry in and effort to advance the knowledge of the board members on this field. More specifically the deep dive analysis was primarily based on IT occupations and IT occupational clusters. The Deep Dive includes an analysis of the top five IT occupations by employment, and the top five IT occupations within six top industries of the Commonwealth, noting that the top six IT occupations represent 70% of all IT jobs in Massachusetts, such as Software Developers, Computer User Support Specialist, and Computer Systems Analyst. Ms. Pokaski noted that these occupations have a high earning potential. The Deep Dive also explored the top certifications and skills most mentioned in job postings, and the geographic distribution of IT jobs in the Commonwealth. The Deep Dive also noted the students that graduated from school in IT-related courses of study and the Unemployment Insurance claimants that were laid off from an IT position. Deep Dive also projected the growth of IT related occupations in the coming years.

It was noted that the distribution of IT jobs across industries includes hiring through staffing firms and consultants, which might not accurately reflect the industry where IT workers are working. This might be the case for why IT occupations are lower in Health Care as compared to other industries. There was a request to look at the provision of H1B visas as it relates to talent recruiting for these positions. Another member requested that the committee dig deeper into the job qualifications and requirements to get a better sense of what is needed for building education and training programs to meet industry needs. Finally, Liz Skidmore noted that apprenticeship might be an avenue for developing a pipeline of trained workers in this field.

**Workforce System Branding**

Secretary Acosta noted that we have currently 30 career centers and 16 workforce boards, but we are still struggling to meet our hiring demands. The purpose of the rebranding initiative is to increase awareness of our career centers, workforce boards and the services that they provide. If we want to effectively market our career centers, workforce boards and services we must all look the same, and have a common organizational culture. Secretary Acosta revealed the proposed new brand -- MassHire. Secretary Acosta also mentioned that after meeting and briefing Governor Charlie Baker and Lieutenant Governor Karen Polito, they expressed their support of the rebranding efforts.

Marina Zhavoronkova briefed the Board on the process of how the MassHire brand was developed, including market testing five potential names and five potential marks. MassHire with the “M” mark was the clear favorite among employers and job seekers, and for this reason it was selected as the proposed brand. Detailed findings on the perceptions of the name MassHire revealed that employers and job seekers liked that the MassHire name is simple, clear, catchy, easy to remember and it has a connection to Massachusetts. The most common negative feedback about MassHire was that it was generic or vague.

Training is expected to begin March 2018. There will be an online training platform for staff and board members, as well as regional in-person training led by a cohort of brand ambassadors. Ms. Zhavoronkova shared potential evaluation metrics to track outcomes from rebranding, such as the businesses served, repeat business, job seekers served and employed. A few local areas will be asked to convert early in the implementation phase and all areas will be asked to be fully re-branded by January 2019. Local areas will receive transition funds to support implementation.

Juliette Mayers explained that the Board’s WIOA Oversight Committee has been actively tracking the branding initiative, and the committee will make a recommendation to the board on brand adoption at the March 2018 meeting. The recommendations include adopting MassHire as the unified brand for the workforce system; applying consistent branding among workforce boards and career centers; tying branding to WIOA implementation efforts such as amending the WIOA state plan to include the adoption of MassHire brand.

Donna Cupelo suggested that in the March meeting the board hear more about the implementation process for the local areas. Sue Mailman asked whether the Board could vote on the brand at today’s meeting. It was explained that some key areas of development and stakeholder engagement have yet to be completed, so a vote today would be pre-mature. It is expected those areas of concern will be addressed by March.

Donna Cupelo adjourned the meeting at 11:58 a.m.