**Massachusetts Workforce Development Board Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday June 20, 2017

Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School

251 Stonehaven Road

Fall River, MA

***Members Present:***

*Aixa Beauchamp, Jesse Brown, James Cassetta, Donna Cupelo, Robert LePage, Susan Mailman, John Mann, Jeffrey McCue, Beth Mitchell, Joanne Pokaski, Elizabeth Skidmore, Juan Vega, Secretary Ronald Walker, Beth Williams*

***Members Absent:***

*Joanne Berwald, Anne Broholm, Gerard Burke, Tricia Canavan, Kathleen Cullen-Cote, Sherry Dong, Senator Eileen Donoghue, Mayor Kimberley Driscoll, Pam Eddinger, Eric Hagopian, Cassius Johnson, Juliette Mayers, Carol Ozelius, Warren Pepicelli, Mayor Dan Rivera, Representative Joseph Wagner, Ray Wrobel.*

***Staff and Guests:***

*Hil Camara (Bristol County Training Consortium), Sarah Case (New England Venture Capital Association), Mari Cooney (DAS), Pahola DeLeon (Exec. Office of Labor & Workforce Development), Davis Goode (Massachusetts Business Roundtable), Jennifer James-Price (Exec. Office of Labor & Workforce Development), Chris Kealey (Massachusetts Business Roundtable), Charlie Pearce (Exec. Office of Labor & Workforce Development), Maegan Pedemonti (HAP Housing), Tom Perreira (Bristol Workforce Investment Board), Nathan Pham (Verizon New England), Cheryl Scott (Exec. Office of Labor & Workforce Development), Sacha Stadhard (Department of Career Services), Alice Sweeney (Department of Career Services), Geoff Veracuteren (Massachusetts Department of Higher Education), Marina Zhavoronkova (Exec. Office of Labor & Workforce Development).*

**Meeting Minutes**

**Welcome & Introductions**

Donna Cupelo called the meeting to order, and welcomed board members and guests. All members and guests introduced themselves. Thomas Perreira, Executive Director of the Bristol Workforce Investment Board (BWIB) shared BWIB’s workforce development efforts, including a Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund grant to train stitchers and sewing machine operators for the growing regional textile industry and partnerships with Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School. Thomas Aubin, Superintendent-Director for Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School shared information about the school’s approach to career preparedness, with a particular focus on readying students for the future labor market. Cheryl Scott announced upcoming changes to the Massachusetts Workforce Development Board website to include posting meeting materials from past Board and committee meetings.

**Workforce Development Update**

Secretary Walker updated the Board on the workforce system re-branding initiative to develop and deploy a unifying brand across the workforce system. A consultant has been engaged to spearhead the project and the Board will be hearing more as the initiative moves forward. WIOA continues to be implemented, while the Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development is working hard to maintain the workforce initiatives that it has put forth, such as Learn to Earn. Secretary Walker announced that all 16 workforce boards have conducted their procurement process to select a One Stop Career Center operator: 12 out of the 16 boards selected their current career center operator while the other 4 selected a new operator. In the budget, Massachusetts saw a 10% reduction in federal funding for FY17, which amounts to $10.5 million less to fund career centers and boards. Secretary Walker also announced recent Workforce Competitive Trust Fund and Workforce Training Fund grants.

**Labor Market and Workforce Information Dashboard**

Susan Mailman presented the quarterly Labor Market and Workforce Information Dashboard to the Board. The purpose of the Labor Market and Workforce Information Dashboard is to capture high-level statewide labor market activity with regard to labor supply and demand. The dashboard was primarily designed for the State Workforce Board members to make informed decisions on workforce policy, and it will be updated and shared at the quarterly State Workforce Board meetings. Ms. Mailman shared key highlights of the quarterly dashboard such as noting that the Massachusetts unemployment rate slightly increased as the US unemployment rate continues to decline, meanwhile the Labor Force participation rate went up, and the number of unemployed individuals also went up.   This may indicate that the improving economy is pulling “discouraged workers” back into the labor market because they see more job opportunities.

A meeting attendee asked if local boards are looking at this data. The response was that the Board does not plan to produce a dashboard for each workforce region, but the dashboard could serve as a model to local boards to produce on their own. It was also noted that the regional planning process is looking at similar data on a regional level. Liz Skidmore noted how the construction industry is under-represented on the labor demand metrics in the dashboard due to the data source used to derive that information. Beth Mitchell also noted the cataloging system not reflect reality, for example, software engineers are not catalogued as engineers although many consider them to be. Joanne Pokaski observed that the number of jobs available far exceeds the number of people unemployed. While the two metrics cannot be directly compared, she points out that it does indicate a tight labor market.

**Youth Committee Discussion**

Cheryl Scott and Sacha Stadhard, on behalf of Cassius Johnson, provided an overview and update on the Board’s Youth Committee’s initiative *Grads of Life Massachusetts*. They shared a preview of the initiative’s High Quality Youth Programming elements that will serve as a foundation for designating quality organizations as well as the provision for technical assistance. The committee will be focusing on engaging key stakeholders, including holding a roundtable in the fall to garner feedback from businesses.

In responding to the High Quality Youth Programming elements, Aixa Beauchamp mentioned that case management is critical to the success of working with young people. Donna Cupelo asked whether this effort is integrated with other initiatives that exist today, such as the Boston PIC’s efforts on youth employment. Ms. Stadhard responded that while the committee engages with stakeholders, there will be special attention paid to identifying areas for collaboration and alignment. Thomas Aubin noted that entities, like vocational schools are already doing similar work effectively, so it is important to not forget about them. Beth Williams mentioned that there is potential to replicate and scale up successful models across the state to target those areas where there is great need and great potential. Jennifer James noted that there is an initiative happening in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education called New Skills for Youth (NSFY) that is also developing a designation, but this effort and the designation is focused on schools. Ms. Scott noted that the Youth Committee has been engaging with the team working on NSFY to ensure there is direct alignment.

**Learn to Earn Update**

Jennifer James provided an updated on the Governor’s Learn to Earn proposal. This program is designed to support individuals who are connected to public support systems, such as housing, child care, and transportation, and assist them in moving back into the labor market without losing their public benefits. In the long-term, the plan is to develop a set of policy recommendations to change public benefit systems so they do not create barriers to sustained employment. In the short-term, the Baker administration will use state money to launch one or two pilot programs to place unemployed and underemployed individuals impacted by the cliff effect in high-demand fields through partnerships with public agencies, businesses, community-based organizations and career centers. The effort will be spearheaded and administered by an interagency workgroup including the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, the Executive Office of Education, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security.

**Board Member Survey Analysis and Discussion**

Cheryl Scott shared the results of the board member survey conducted over the spring. This survey asked Board members questions about aspects of the Board service, including the quarterly meetings and committee meetings. 19 out of the 33 board members responded to the survey. Overall members appeared satisfied with Board service and the committees, although many expressed frustration with running out of time in the quarterly board meetings, reducing time for discussion and Board interaction. Board members discussed meeting attendance and how distance impacts this. Donna Cupelo expressed the importance of a statewide board to travel to different parts of the Commonwealth, and that travel is a part of Board member service. Beth Mitchell suggested extending the board meetings to longer than 2 hours; this would make the travel and meeting time more worthwhile, and could provide more time for discussion. Members agreed to members agreed to try this approach. The first extended meeting will be September 11th, 2017.

**Review and Approval of March Meeting Minutes**

Donna Cupelo noted that she will not call for the approval of the March 2017 meeting minutes because the board did not meet quorum.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.