

**MassHire State Workforce Board Meeting**

Thursday, June 10, 2021

10:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting (via WebEx)

**Meeting Minutes**

***(Draft)***

***Members Present (logged in):***

*Rosalin Acosta, Joanne Berwald, Jesse Brown, James Cassetta, Maria Ferreira-Bedard, Rainer Gawlick, Robert LePage, Eric Lesser, Juliette Mayers, Catherine Mick (designee of Marylou Sudders), Jennifer Morales, Radhames Nova, Jerald Parisella, Joanne Pokaski, Elizabeth Skidmore, Juan Vega, Ray Wrobel*

***Members Absent:***

*Anne Broholm, Sherry Dong, Pam Eddinger, Pamela Everhart, Jessyca Feliciano, Axel Grippo, John Mann, Warren Pepicelli, Sherri Pitcher, Janice Weekes, Maicharia Weir Lytle*

***Guests and Staff***

*Christine Abrams, John Afonso, Jenna Borkoski, Inez Canada, Deborah Cassano, Michael Falasca, Shaun Gabrielli, Margaret Gilligan, Jennifer Hansen, Jennifer James, Laura Lee, Kathie Mainzer, John Mann, John McCarthy, Kristen McKenna, Suzy Mead, Bruce Mendelsohn, Patrick Mitchell, Celina Pendexter, Angela Prince, Laura Rivera, Jeff Roberge, Alice Sweeney, Marina Zhavoronkova*

**Welcome & Introductions**

Joanne Pokaski called the meeting to order and then reviewed the meeting agenda. Ms. Pokaski held a moment of remembrance for Beth Williams, a MassHire State Workforce Board member who recently passed away.

Cheryl Scott announced that the MassHire Awards will be held on July 22, 2021. Ms. Scott noted the next Board meeting in September may be held in-person due to the expiration of Governor Baker’s Emergency Order that allowed remote meetings for public bodies. *(Update: on June 16, 2021,* [*Governor Baker extended these provisions*](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/updated-guidance-on-holding-meetings-pursuant-to-the-act-extending-certain-covid-19-measures) *through April 1, 2022.)*

**Workforce Development Update**

Secretary Acosta provided an economic update, highlighting the drop in the unemployment rate (16.4% in April 2020, to 6.5% in May 2021), and an increasing demand for workers (there were more job postings than the prior to the pandemic). This presents an opportunity for the workforce system to re-employ workers into higher skilled and higher wage jobs. Massachusetts has made significant investments in upskilling the talent pipeline, including Workforce Skills Cabinet grants for capital equipment, and The Career Technical Initiative (CTI) that provides training for adults in the building trades, information technology, advanced manufacturing and healthcare. Meanwhile, the work search requirement for UI claimants will be reinstated on June 15, 2021, and roughly 400,000 people will come off benefits as the pandemic relief benefits expire in September. EOLWD has been reaching out to claimants to encourage them to look for new jobs and to remind them that MassHire is available to assist in their job search journey. Secretary Acosta also encouraged employers to take advantage of programs like [Workshare](https://www.mass.gov/topics/workshare-program) when bringing employees back to work.

The Board’s Modernization Committee continues to meet regularly to provide guidance on the future technology of our workforce system. EOLWD plans to procure a new UI system first, followed by procurement for a new re-employment system. Secretary Acosta then walked through the Workforce Skills Cabinet FY22 proposed budget.

Christine Abrams announced that Commonwealth Corporation Foundation has a new mission. She presented on the work Commonwealth Corporation (CommCorp) is engaged in to address the childcare crisis in Massachusetts. They have partnered with the Massachusetts Department of Early Childhood and Care to understand the current state of childcare, the makeup of the childcare workforce, and the importance of childcare to the economy. Many providers can’t operate at full capacity because they can’t find workers due to low wages and other challenges. They are setting up exploratory conversations with key stakeholders to explore new approaches to addressing barriers, innovative models, and possible solutions. Ms. Abrams also reminded the Board of Commonwelath Corporation’s resources to assist employers in addressing workforce challenges including the [Career Technical Initiative](https://commcorp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Career-Technical-Initiative.pdf), the [Rapid Reemployment Program](https://commcorp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Rapid-Re-Employment-Flyer.pdf), and the [Talent Access Portal](https://commcorp.softr.io/).

Juliette Mayers asked if transportation was being looked at as a workforce challenge. Secretary Acosta responded that yes, it is absolutely being studied, and they have engaged in conversations with Secretary Tesler on this issue. Joanne Pokaksi asked about communication to claimants. Secretary Acosta responded that they are sending weekly emails to claimants letting them know that work search is coming back, and that there are over 200,000 job postings available in [JobQuest](https://jobquest.dcs.eol.mass.gov/jobquest/LandingPage.aspx), MassHire’s central access portal for job seekers and businesses. Meanwhile, MassHire is redesigning JobQuest to improve the portal to accommodate more online users. Liz Skidmore asked if the childcare conversation includes non-traditional work hours. Christine Abrams responded that yes, and that is one of the pilots that is being looked at. Ms. Mayers asked if the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding is restricted, or can we use that funding where there is most need. Secretary Acosta responded that there are restrictions to the funding and the states are learning more about what those restrictions are and how the funding can be applied. Ms. Pokaski asked if there is a tentative date for a return to in-person services. Secretary Acosta responded that many career centers are starting to offer in-person services by appointment only. They hope is to have walk-in services available at the end of August/beginning of September, but this will vary by area; local workforce boards may decide to do this earlier or later. Ms. Pokaski asked about the relationship between CommCorp and Commonwealth Corporation Foundation; is the Foundation a new entity? Ms. Abrams responded that the Commonwealth Corporation Foundation is a 501c3 entity that a part of CommCorp. The Foundation can take private dollars which allows for flexibility in funding. The Foundation can pivot and react to immediate needs, it can advocate and collaborate, as well as fundraise to bring in money to support CommCorp’s work. Secretary Acosta added that EOLWD, as a state agency, can’t fundraise for private dollars; CommCorp, through its foundation, as the ability to fundraise and do programming that may not fit within state grant requirements. The Foundation is not new, but it has been revived under Ms. Abram’s leadership. Most of CommCorp’s funding is state funding, so the foundation allows for diversifying funding sources.

**Meeting Minutes**

Joanne Pokaski asked if there were any changes to the meeting minutes from the March 18, 2021 meeting. Cheryl Scott noted that the minutes did not accurately reflect Jennifer Morales’ attendance. Ms. Pokaski called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the March 18, 2021 meeting minutes, inclusive of the change. Maria Feriera-Bedard made the motion to approve the minutes, Ray Wrobel seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously through voice and chat vote.

**Apprenticeship Update & Discussion**

Patrick Mitchell presented on the recent developments in Massachusetts’ effort to expand apprenticeship in Massachusetts. Mr. Mitchell reviewed the apprenticeship expansion goals to expand to new industries and occupations, diversify the apprenticeship workforce and deliver high quality services and programming. He identified key differences and benefits of apprenticeship, in comparison to other talent development programs, like internships. Mr. Mitchell noted recent trends in apprenticeship, including an increase in new apprenticeships, and expansion to target industries such as technology, manufacturing, healthcare, hospitality, and childcare, highlighting compelling employer partners and programs, noting that many new employer partners are taking advantage of the new Registered Apprentice Tax Credit.

Mr. Mitchell also highlighted organizational changes within the Division of Apprentice Standards (DAS), including enhancing the database to serve as an efficient, accurate, streamlined single point of access for sponsors. The new database will allow for more online business transactions, such as virtual audits, allowing DAS to be more responsive to businesses. Mr. Mitchell noted that DAS has hired new staff to support employers and apprentices and introduced Angela Prince and Margie Gilligan.

Mr. Patrick noted that Massachusetts has been very successful in bringing in grants to support apprenticeship expansion. Massachusetts was most recently awarded a grant from US DOL to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, including individuals with disabilities, which supports the apprenticeship expansion goal of diversifying the apprenticeship pipeline.

Secretary Acosta raised the point that employers are needed to expand apprenticeship, which is an effective method for getting people into higher paying jobs. There are currently many workers, or recently displaced workers, who were or are in low wage jobs. There is a hard road ahead to get these workers into higher paying jobs. For employers that have a goal around diversity, apprenticeship is a great way to achieve those goals. It would be great if the Board could serve as advocates for apprenticeship. Rainer Gawlick added that the biggest barriers he has encountered in his work with [Apprenti Massachusetts](https://apprenticareers.org/locations/massachusetts/) to expand technology apprenticeships, is that businesses have a hard time thinking differently. It would be great if Massachusetts could gain momentum around this type of workforce development model. As for Apprenti Massachusetts, of the 80 people who started apprenticeships, 29 have completed both the related technical instruction and on-the-job learning, and 51 apprentices are still in the apprenticeship process. Apprenticeships have been in Java software development, IT business analyst and IT security with 11 employer partners. For Apprenti Massachusetts, the average pre-apprenticeship salary is around $35,000, the average salary during apprenticeship is $56,000 and the average post-apprenticeship salary is $72,000, demonstrating the tremendous benefits these apprenticeships offer apprentices and the state economy. Bruce Mendelsohn added in the chat that MassHire Workforce Boards in the Central Region and Downtown Boston are involved in the national [TQA Clark program](https://tqaclark.com/), which seeks to advance tech apprenticeships.

Liz Skidmore presented on the progress and challenges of increasing diversity in construction apprenticeship in Massachusetts through her work with the [Policy Group on Tradeswomen’s Issues](https://policygroupontradeswomen.org/) (PGTI). She noted that deliberate efforts to increase diversity is important, and that we need to expand our education and workforce development mission to include apprenticeship as well as college when presenting post-secondary options. Ms. Skidmore shared that PGTI has learned from past failed strategies of only relying on recruiting and training women. The need is to not only recruit and train women, and also make sure they are working. This includes ensuring there is childcare; as such, they are standing up a pilot in Boston to create non-standard childcare. PGTI is also getting folks ready for their apprenticeships through pre-apprenticeship programs like YouthBuild and Job Corps, and making connections with vocational technical schools and MassHire.

Representative Jerry Parisella introduced himself as a new Board member, taking over the seat from Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante.

Bob LePage noted that a number of vocational technical schools are building pathways toward apprenticeship opportunities, and they are working with counselors to not just talk about college, but careers as well. Voc tech schools are also looking at options to build innovation pathways in high-demand fields such as IT.

Joanne Pokaski recognized that pursuing apprenticeships might be challenging for businesses to consider, noting that some may be holding back because of the start-up costs involved (time, money, etc.) There are, however, incentives and benefits, such as free training. Hearing success stories from other businesses might be a helpful strategy to get more businesses interested. Also, it might be helpful to have information on the apprenticeships already exist, such as a standards builder, rather than having an employer figure it out on their own. Kristen McKenna of Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) noted that they have worked with the Massachusetts Restaurant Association on apprenticeships. This was initiated by Kerry Miller who organized apprenticeships with Quinsigamond Community College and was looking to do something similar in Boston. Apprenticeship occupations included restaurant management specialists, front-of-the-house jobs, culinary skills, and back-of-the-house jobs. BHCC has also done apprenticeships with Partners in medical assisting. Ms. McKenna noted that she is a huge fan of apprenticeships, having run apprenticeships with AFL CIO and promoted a pre-apprenticeship model. It works so well because employers develop relationships with apprentices.

Radhames Nova noted that his work with Junior Achievement is working with middle school students on starting a career pathway. The hope is that this will lead them to go into feeder youth programs. Mr. Nova also asked in the chat how young people are informed of apprenticeship opportunities. Mr. LePage responded in the chat that high school students in career pathways programs are being informed of the potential of apprenticeship opportunities.

Kristen McKenna asked in the chat whether there will be opportunities to build pre-apprenticeship programs geared to those who lack the academic skills or career readiness skills to allow them to be successful in the apprenticeship. Liz Skidmore chatted back that in addition to the outreach Rainer spoke about for apprenticeships in IT, more outreach needs to be done. Currently, the union apprenticeships do a number of things to reach students in high schools through both school-hosted career fairs, and by serving on the advisory boards of the vocational technical/CTE schools. PGTI has also developed Massachusetts Girls In Trades, which is building a stronger pipeline for girls vocational technical/CTE schools to enter directly into apprenticeships. Ms. Skidmore requested that women interested in a construction apprenticeship should visit [BuildALifeMA.org](https://buildalifema.org/); there are great resources and videos on this website.

Axel Grippo asked if there are any marketing materials for apprenticeships that can be distributed, particularly geared toward manufacturing or IT. Similarly, Juliette Mayers chatted wondering about the best way to refer employers who may have an interest. Patrick Mitchell responded that people could direct these inquiries to him. He and his team could get outreach materials to interested employers, as well as present to any company on apprenticeships.

Ms. Pokaski adjourned the meeting at 11:32 a.m.