

City of Somerville, Massachusetts Job Creation and Retention Trust

Trustees

Thomas Bent
Vickie Choitz
Lisa Cook
Silvana Dinka
Thomas Galligani
Anika Van Eaton
Rand Wilson
Josh Grehan

Minutes

Somerville Job Creation and Retention Trust
Tuesday, May 7, 2019, at 6:00 pm
Cross Street Elder Center
165 Broadway Avenue

Meeting began at 6:20pm

1. Approval of April 4th, 2019 Minutes

- Unanimously approved

2. Discussion on City-Wide Jobs Board RFP

Thomas Bent, Anika Van Eaton, and Ben Sommer gave an update on vendor interviews that were held on Thursday May 2nd. Price proposals for vendors were also received.

Rand Wilson asked if we could use the \$100k cost to hire a person to help job-seekers fill out resumes and use existing jobs platforms, e.g., Monster.com, as opposed to creating a Somerville-specific, skills-based jobs-board.

After a group discussion of initial and on-going cost of each platform, Vickie Choitz asked for staff to create a business model for how the jobs-board would be staffed and funded, if not entirely through JCRT funds, e.g., could employer post fees support some of the cost?

Next steps include a draft business model, speaking with other cities that have used Skillsmart, and a meeting with local businesses to gauge employer interest in using and possibly paying for this service.

3. Process for dispensing Trust funds

Ben Sommer presented on municipal procurement laws which are included in the “Municipal Purchasing Requirements” document. Not included in that document are Combuys, the State’s list of pre-approved vendors, and solesource, another method of vendor selection.

4. Discussion on Jobs Trust funding priorities

Vickie Choitz gave a presentation on a foundational skills report from Detroit and best practices on adult foundational skills and workforce training program design.

Silvana Dinka expressed that two major barriers to entering a job training program were English language skills and childcare.

Ben Sommer noted that the most important and investment ready strategy in the Talent Equity Playbook is Strategy 1. In particular, capacity for English language learners is limited. The City is working towards greater capacity for strategies 2 and 3, and is, for the moment, well situated in Strategy 4. Ben will keep the Board up to date on progress for Good Jobs programs in particular.

Several initial ideas were discussed for Trust Fund investments, including possibly supporting the development of Somerville-specific industry partnerships of employers, training providers, and other relevant partners to develop workforce strategies in particular in-demand industry sectors (similar to MassHire sector partnerships, but more local). Also discussed were ideas around additional training programs, additional ESL education (particularly integrated with occupational training), leveraging career and technical education at the high school, development of employer resource networks like WorkLab Innovations to support businesses and quality jobs, support for the formation of worker-owned coops (especially in sectors that could help training participants, e.g., child care).

Next steps include sharing with the board labor market information on in-demand occupations to inform possible training programs under Strategy 1. Also, share a list of Somerville high school’s CTE programs, so the board has a better sense of current training capacity.

Anika Van Eaton suggested Board members share three ideas for programs or investments to prompt discussion. The Board agreed that this would occur on July 2nd meeting.

5. Updates and Announcements

Cambridge Crossing has sent in the first payment of \$497,570 for their EF building, which has received its building permit.

6. Other Items Not Reasonably Anticipated

Rand Wilson corrected the name of the organization formerly known as the “Industrial Cooperative Alliance” in the minutes to the “ICA-Group.”

Thomas Galligani suggested the Board create a sub-committee to discuss spending “cadence” as the economic cycle will lead to some years with little linkage income.

7. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 8:23pm