

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
Jesse Clingan

Minutes

Somerville Job Creation and Retention Trust
Tuesday, January 28, 2019, at 6:00PM
Atrium Conference Room
Tufts Administrative Building, 167 Holland St.

In attendance: Vickie Choitz, Anika Van Eaton, Thomas Bent, Rand Wilson, Lisa Cook, Thomas Galligani, Jesse Clingan, Silvana Dinka, Josh Grehan

Staff Present: Ben Sommer

Meeting began at 6:08pm

1. Approval of January 14th minutes
 - Motion to approve made by Tom Bent, seconded by Lisa Cook. The minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Review and discuss priority investment ideas identified by the board and input from employers in the Chamber of Commerce meeting.
 - Tom Bent recounted highlights from the business community forum on January 16th (See Appendix A). Rand Wilson asked what the City could do to help with expanding businesses incubated at Greentown Labs. Tom Galligani responded that the economic development office could assist with space search and coaching services. Vickie Choitz brought attention to the last line of priority investment A, resources being “asynchronous online.”
 - Discussion was held on priority investment ideas (See Appendix A)
 - For “Coordination and Data Collection Staff Position”, Anika noted that the end date should be changed to “through June 30, 2022.”
 - Josh Grehan asked to clarify the difference between “Industry specific training programs” and “contextualized education for adult and English language learners.” Also, which one is in the greatest need. Josh noted that the Talent Equity Playbook has information on education and need.

- Rand Wilson expressed that his goal is to make existing jobs better and that his decisions would be based around that.
- Ben Sommer noted that, for the Career Navigation investment, we could use a Request for Information prior to issuing a Request for Proposals to gather some more ideas.
- Jesse Clingan spoke on the importance of protecting vulnerable workers who may be taken advantage of. He also noted that rapid response services were important, as well, given examples like Royal Hospitality.
- Lisa Cook described the challenges of industry specific training and adult basic education given new state requirements for operators like SCALE. Lisa noted that there are many Somerville young adults between the ages of 17 and 24 years old who are being left behind.
- Josh Grehan asked about which programs would be difficult to get funding for otherwise and which programs can leverage other funding. Discussion landed on wage theft/worker rights training, coordination staff position, and rapid response strategy would be hardest to get other funding to support. The priorities with possible chances of getting outside funding were industry-specific training, contextualized education for ABE/ESOL professional development, and career navigation resources. However, possible other funding for these priorities could take many months to develop and are not assured (e.g., they likely would be competitive grants).. Anika Van Eaton noted that for some priorities there was existing funding but that it was not enough and also that often funding is federal and has many restrictions and requirements that JCRT funding would not have.
- Rand Wilson wanted to make sure that these investments have a big impact early on to acknowledge support in the community for this funding source.
- Tom Bent agreed and also noted that industry specific training was very important for the business community.
- Anika Van Eaton noted that the final evaluation of the Tuition-Free Community College program of Boston would be coming out soon.
- Jesse Clingan wondered which of these priorities could address diversity in the civil service exam as well as helping residents get jobs in local construction projects. Board members noted that career navigation and the coordinator staff position might help address these issues.

3. Vote on initial investments

- Members used the Borda voting process to prioritize investment ideas. See Appendix A for ranked list.
- Josh Grehan made a motion to vote on the ranked priorities. Lisa Cook seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous with all in favor.

4. Funding Allocation

- Discussion was held on funding estimates for ranked investment priorities, starting with the first item on the list.

- Vote: Tom Bent made a motion to allocate \$1,260,000 to fund initial investment priorities 1 through 6. Josh Grehan seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous with all in favor. Vickie noted that these amounts were the initial authorization; however, as we review proposals, the board may choose to slightly amend these amounts to fund good prospects.
5. Discuss process for writing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and any necessary sub-committees
 - Vickie Choitz and Rand Wilson volunteered to be on wage theft subcommittee
 - Lisa Cook and Tom Bent volunteered to be on the industry specific training and ESOL/ABE subcommittee.
 6. Adjournment
 - Anika Van Eaton made a motion to adjourn. Tom Galligani seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35pm.

Appendix A

Jobs Trust Board Business Community meeting, Jan. 16, 2020

In attendance:

Business and development leaders	Jobs Trust Board and City staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jen Atwood, East Somerville Main Streets• Cambridge Health Alliance• Rocco DiRico, Tufts University• Matt Ehrie, Federal Realty Investment Trust (developer)• Jessica Eshleman, Union Square Main Streets• John W Fenton, DLJ (developer)• Cathleen Finn, Verizon• Kevin Gatlin, Winter Hill Bank• Jim Harvey, Holiday Inn• Greg Karczewski, US2 (developer)• Sandra McGoldrick, Winter Hill Bank• Partners HealthCare• Joubin Hatamzadeh, Greentown Labs• Jess Willis, The Independent, Foundry on Elm, and other restaurants• John Wiseman, Middlesex Federal Savings• Stephen Mackey, Chamber of Commerce (represents 290 Somerville businesses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tom Bent, Bent Electrical• Vickie Choitz, Resident• Lisa Cook, SCALE• Tom Galligani, City of Somerville• Ben Sommer, City of Somerville

This was a **well-attended** meeting, with 18 business leaders (including Tom Bent) and developers. The group included a **good cross-sectors of businesses** from health care, hospitality, financial services, and tech. Both Union Square Main Streets and East Somerville Main Streets were represented, covering many **small businesses**. Many employers are hiring, e.g., Tufts has 168 openings; Verizon is hiring for the new tower at South Station.

Questions/Feedback on investment ideas:

Someone asked for an update on **the Jobs Board**. The City is talking with Job Case in Kendall Sq. about them building a simple jobs board for Somerville, pro bono. We discussed the employer focus group last year on the two national jobs board models the Jobs Trust considered. A member of the group agreed that the two examples were more sophisticated/complicated than Somerville businesses needed right now and relatively expensive compared with that we need at

this point. It was noted that the competency-based hiring idea was intriguing, but something to explore in the future.

The group discussed the **targeted industries and occupations** the Jobs Trust job training investments would target. We explained that we'd researched the in-demand industries and occupations, including Business Office, health care, biotech/life sciences, retail and hospitality. But, we'll keep the RFP open and require applicants to specify the industry/occupations and explain the need/demand. Greg noted that the **life sciences** sector will be a big part of the economic growth and offered US2 to help gather information from incoming companies about skill needs. Also suggested we talk with Bob Coughlin at the [Massachusetts Biotechnology Council](#) (Massbio).

Also need **general technology training**. We spoke of the strength of business-led training partnerships and encouraged Greentown Labs to apply for a training RFP in partnership with training provider(s) and support services providers.

We also talked about the **importance of partnerships** of training providers, employers, and support service providers for program success.

ESL is very imp. 80% of Holiday Inn employees speak English as a second language. Also, many have skills and credential from their home country, but just need more English.

Stipends during training will be very important. Low-income residents have to support their families. Hard to engage in training and also working multiple jobs.

Many liked the ideas of **HR training for small businesses**, but these owners struggle to attend business workshops and programs. They don't have time. Union Square Mainstreets has found that they need to go to them to deliver training/info. Jobs Trust should consider ways to take the education to the small business owners. Also consider digital training so they can take it whenever they have time.

Somerville has more artists per capita than NYC. Somerville has a significant **Creative Economy** with lots of artists and makers. They need business development skills. How can Jobs Trust investments help support the Creative Economy here?

Greentown Labs incubates over 100 employers. These entrepreneurs have not had any business training. Retaining employees is a big challenge for them. **HR training** will be very important for them. Also need manager training to work with impatient young career-focused workers, e.g., conflict resolution, de-escalation, time management. GTL businesses want to stay in Somerville. GTL wants to stay in Somerville.

Need **incentives for employers to hire** the trainees.

New city staff person should focus on **developing long-term partnerships with businesses**. We affirmed that would be a big part of the role.

Appendix B
Jobs Trust Board Initial Investment Ideas

Rank	Idea	total # points
1	Wage Theft/Worker Rights and Responsibilities Training + HR and Job Quality Training for Small Businesses	63
2	Coordination and Data Collection Staff Position	62
3	Contextualized Education for Adult and English Language Learners	50
4	Industry-Specific Training Program	47
5	Rapid Response Strategy	45
6	The SPS-BHCC program to provide one year of pre-college courses, career coaching, and work experience for SHS graduates not going directly to college (Yr 13)	40
7	Career Navigation Resources	38
8	Professional Development for Adult Education Teachers and Workforce Professionals	34
9	The Somerville Public Schools (SPS) - Bunker Hill Community College Pell Grant gap funding and college counseling	24