



# City of Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust Monthly Meeting

Vickie Choitz, Managing Trustee  
Anika Van Eaton, Co-Manager  
*Trustees*  
Thomas Bent  
Jesse Clingan  
Lisa Cook  
Silvana Dinka  
Thomas F. Galligani, Jr.  
Colleen Moran  
Rand Wilson

## Meeting Minutes

---

**Location:** Online via GoToWebinar Platform

**Date:** December 14, 2021

**Time:** 6:03 PM

---

### Attendance

- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Jesse Clingan, Lisa Cook, Silvana Dinka, Colleen Moran, Anika Van Eaton, Rand Wilson. Tom Galligani joined shortly after attendance roll call but stayed for duration of meeting.
- Economic Development Staff: Jennifer Mancina, William Blackmer

### Meeting Minutes

- V Choitz: Meeting called to order at 6:03pm. Quorum established.
- W Blackmer: House rules about technology delivered.

#### 1. Review and Approval of October 19 and November 9 Meeting Minutes

- V Choitz: proposed minor edits to the first page of 10/19 meeting minutes to clarify that \$30,000 of the Welcome Project Year 1 funding was for curriculum development and \$89,000 was for delivery of trainings.
- W Blackmer: participants are having trouble unmuting themselves.
- A Van Eaton: asked for all panelists to all unmuted default and speakers can mute themselves after they have finished speaking. Did not have any meeting edits.
- Motion: L Cook makes motion to approve 10/19 meeting minutes as amended on the screen. T Bent seconds.
- Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 9-0 approving 10/19 meeting minutes as amended.
- V Choitz: We also have November 9 meeting minutes to approve. Are there any edits to the November 9 meeting minutes?
- Motion: T Bent makes motion to approve 11/9 meeting minutes. C Moran seconds the motion.
- Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 9-0 approving 11/9 meeting minutes.

#### 2. Public Meeting Debrief and Reflections

- V Choitz: WB sent out link to public discussion Jamboard from November 9<sup>th</sup> annual meeting and a summary of comments and questions received during the meeting. We want to give the board members an opportunity to reflect on the meeting. Does anyone want to highlight or comment on any suggestions we received, or on the meeting overall?
  - C Moran: Great to include Jamboard to allow for everyone in audience to participate

- R Wilson: I think people had trouble...the technology was confusing. It took people a while to figure out. We did get a bunch of comments. The technology is stilted in comparison to an in-person meeting.
- T Bent: Agree with R Wilson. With virtual meeting we miss out on back-and-forth dialogue that happens in-person. Success depends on individual's tech skills. Overall for what we needed to accomplish it worked well.
- L Cook: How many were in attendance online?
- W Blackmer: At the highest point there were about 35 people on the call including the Board.
- T Bent: That's another challenge with GoToMeeting; we cannot see who all is on the call. Most of the comments we received seemed to come from providers or someone attached to one of the providers. I don't know how many attendees were general members of the public. Do we have a list of attendees?
- W Blackmer: Yes, I can send this attendee list.
- R Wilson: Echoing T Bent, I wish we could use a different meeting platform. Hard not to be able to see public.
- V Choitz: There are webinar style and meeting style formats. We did the webinar style, to prevent glitches, but that made it hard to know who was in the room. A Van Eaton and I have discussed with City staff the idea of using the meeting style in the future if we continue using this platform?
- T Bent: I believe the City is starting to go back to more public meetings, is this correct?
  - T Galligani: City Council had first in-person meeting this past Thursday. This is the first committee to do so. City is in the process of developing a strategy for public meetings to be hybrid meetings in the next couple months. As explained in standard opening remarks we have the flexibility to host these meetings virtually until April 2022.
  - V Choitz: Emergency act expires on April 1<sup>st</sup>. At the end of this meeting, we will discuss scheduling our next meeting and at that time we can discuss how the Board members are feeling about coming back to in-person meetings.
- V Choitz: Going back to public meeting feedback, the themes that emerged from public comments were in-line with the direction of the Board, such as providing supports for program participants, leveraging employer connections, emphasizing worker rights, childcare investments.

### 3. Linkage Funds Update

- W Blackmer: Displaying December memo to talk us through the next few agenda items. After our last meeting, the Board had invested all but about \$5,000 of the received linkage fees, so we had to put our investments on pause. Great news is that we have recently received nearly \$322,000 in linkage fees from DLJ's 101 South development at Boynton Yards. Current uncommitted funds we can now discuss are. \$327,193.

### 4. Grantee Performance Update

#### a. Just-A-Start Deliverables

- W Blackmer: Earlier this fall, about 3 months ago, Just-A-Start graduated 6 Somerville residents in IT and Biomedical career trainings. The contract was to serve 5 residents. Thus far, 4 participants have obtained employment and they are well-positioned to meet their 75% placement goal within one year of graduation. A 5<sup>th</sup> graduate is scheduled to start a job in January. Given the success of these programs, City staff recommend renewing contract in amount of \$113,523 for a second year of these trainings. This will be voted on later in the agenda. They are scheduled to start up again in January 2022 with 6 Somerville residents enrolled; 5 in IT and 1 in Biomedical. Are there questions?
- T Bent: On the 2 that hadn't gotten jobs yet, do you know what the circumstances are for the two that are not employed yet?

- W Blackmer: I don't have specific details on those students, but both are actively engaged with Just-A-Start's coaches.
- T Bent: I would be curious to know this information.
- C Moran: Which employers did the graduates go with?
- W Blackmer: They have been placed across 5 different employers. Biomedical student placed with Thermo Fisher. The IT students were placed at Brockton Public Schools, Medford Public Schools, Mass General Brigham, and Granite Telecommunications.
- T Bent: Somerville has a lot of open positions. Are we making sure providers know about these openings?
- W Blackmer: Yes, we have talked with all grantees and asked, "Who would be the best person from your organization to be on a community providers job leads email list with City of Somerville openings on a weekly basis?" In the first list, I highlighted specific questions that were applicable to trainings we fund.

## 5. Revisit Board Approved Priorities and The Welcome Project Proposal for additional \$30,000

- V Choitz: We wanted to refresh the Board members' memories of our prioritization items for investment that we voted on earlier this year to guide investment decisions.
  - 1) Industry-specific training programs: this has not yet been funded in the current year. We funded Just-A-Start, Per Scholas, and AACA last year, but we have not invested in the priority yet this year. We are discussing a vote on Just-A-Start tonight. Per Scholas and AACA contracts end in late January and late March respectively, so we will not vote on those reinvestments at this time.
  - 2) Childcare Career Advancement Initiative: We would need to put out a request for proposals to drive a competitive process related to this initiative since the estimated value is in excess of \$10,000. We have scheduled this for a vote tonight.
  - 3) Wage Theft and Worker Rights: We voted to fund Welcome Project \$89,000 for renewal of the training portion of their contract in our October meeting. They had also proposed a \$30,000 Leadership Institute/Train-the-Trainer program, but we did not have funds at that time in our account to vote on the \$30,000 amount, but we do have the funds now.
  - 4) Contextualized Education for Adult and English Language Learners: BHCC that we voted on funding earlier this year falls into this category. One of the other investments is in SCALE, but they will not be ready for reinvestment until March or April 2022.
  - 5) Professional Development for adult education teachers and workplace professionals: City staff have not made much movement on this priority yet, but as Board commit funds to other investments, we will ask City staff to place emphasis on this.
  - 6) Somerville Municipal Apprenticeship Program (Feasibility Study): J Mancina will present updates on her research later this evening.
  - 7) HR/Quality Job Training for Somerville small businesses and entrepreneurs: We were not able to find a partner for this in the past, but still definitely on our priority list.
    - R. Wilson: I spoke with Dave Hammer at ICA Group and mentioned our struggle to find someone to do this training and he said he might have someone in mind. V Choitz asked for him to share the name.
  - 8) Rapid Response Strategy for Worker Displacement: In reference to Royal Hospitality. City staff have done great research on putting together a rapid response strategy that J Mancina will discuss later.
  - 9) Supporting employee ownership business models in Somerville: This is another forthcoming priority that we will work on.
  - I will stop there as we have no updates on the additional priorities.
  - V Choitz: are there any questions or concerns about this refresher on our priorities.

- T Bent: Given City's work on rapid response, that should be able to come off the Board's plate.
- V Choitz: Yes, we don't anticipate needing to contribute any funding toward this.

## 6. Votes on Investments

### a. Just-A-Start: Vote on renewing contract of \$113,523 for year two of industry trainings.

- W Blackmer: This is part of priority #1 discussed in Item 5. Just-A-Start is planning to train the same amount in Year 2. They have recruited Somerville residents who are set to begin in January.
- Motion: to approve made by T Bent and seconded by Anika Van Eaton.
- Roll Call Vote: Motion approved by 8-0. S Dinka was not online for this vote.

### b. Voting to fund a Childcare Initiative (RFP)

- V Choitz: Idea is to commit \$150,000 to an initiative in which staff with support of sub-committee write a request for proposal to create a training and career advancement program to expand the capacity of childcare in Somerville. An important need of participants in training programs.
- J Mancia: The committee that had presented this to the Trust has notified Jenn of the continually evolving childcare situation. They are seeing impacts that run from pre-school age all the way up to middle school/high school after school programs.
  - T Bent: Do you think that the biggest roadblock is training or salary?
  - J Mancia: Might be a combination of both. The reason they changed their strategy was that what they were focused on required extensive education, which takes time, and there is no more time amidst the crisis. That is why the committee is looking towards potential licensing and certification funding as opposed to 4-year degrees for example.
  - T Bent: Has the committee looked at involving Center for Career and Technical Education (CTE) at the high school?
  - J Mancia: Yes, this connection has been made.
  - V Choitz: One of the conundrums of the field is related to the push to improve the quality of childcare, which leads to a push for providers to obtain additional certifications, but this starts to restrict the capacity of providers.
  - W Blackmer: confirmed S Dinka has returned to the meeting.
  - Motion: A Van Eaton makes a motion to allocate \$150,000 to put out an RFP for a Childcare Career Advancement Initiative. V Choitz seconds the motion.
  - Roll Call Vote: 9-0 Board members support the motion, so the motion passes.
  - R Wilson: We should involve local unions that are involved with childcare
  - V Choitz: Yes, we are seeking Board members to volunteers for a subcommittee to draft this RFP. R Wilson I will add you to this subcommittee. Are there additional Board members who are interested?
    - A Van Eaton, S Dinka, J Clingan all expressed interest in joining R Wilson on this subcommittee.
    - City staff will assemble the subcommittee. W Blackmer will reach out to by email to subcommittee to set meeting date.

### c. Voting on Welcome Project Proposal for additional \$30,000

- V Choitz: Vote is to support The Welcome Project's ask for an additional \$30,000 to fund their Train-the-Trainer/Leadership Program.
- W Blackmer: I've been in touch with Francisca recently and they have seen very strong attendance at weekly Know Your Rights sessions in the past two months.
- Motion: Made by R Wilson to fund \$30,000 for the Welcome Project's Leadership Institute. Motion seconded by L Cook.

- Roll Call Vote: Motion passes 9-0.

## 7. Municipal Apprenticeship Update

- J Mancía: City of Somerville HR has continued to conduct research and they are asking to provide an update in January, but they have made significant progress.
  - V Choitz: Do you know what kind of progress they have made? Have they looked into other programs, into feasibility?
  - J Mancía: They are looking into feasibility and at what the gaps are that currently exist in their workforce.
  - V Choitz: Apprenticeship programs are complex models, very strong, but complex. Does HR have a good handle on what we are trying to achieve with a municipal apprenticeship program, or does more guidance and information about this need to be provided?
  - J Mancía: I did provide information on apprenticeships, but what I am not sure of is the feasibility of an apprenticeship versus a training program.
- V Choitz: To remind the Board, what we have prioritized funding on this topic is a feasibility study of doing a municipal apprenticeship in Somerville. If there is interest, what we would be doing is funding an expert to look at rules and public regulations in Somerville and how to navigate those.
- T Galligani: It is unclear to me whether advocates are asking for a professional development program, an apprenticeship program, or another type of program. Do we know what exactly the aim or ask is?
  - R Wilson: Proposal has evolved from Somerville Municipal Employees Union. Sentiment is that city employees cannot afford to live in Somerville. They want to ensure that a pipeline exists from the high school into City jobs, and a pipeline once a City employee, to advance. They were conceiving as an apprenticeship model. I was hoping we could model after another City that is implementing something similar.
  - T Galligani: How does an apprenticeship work in the union? Apprenticeship means something specific in the trade union.
  - T Bent: Usually apprenticeships are focusing on one specific trade. We could create a more formal mechanism to connect CTE to City employment opportunities, such as DPW.
  - J Mancía: My understanding is that this type of mechanism has existed in the past
    - T Bent: Yes, when new CTE Director is on-board, we should meet with them and sit down with City to discuss this idea more.
    - L Cook: This week SCALE had a meeting and new CTE Director was named this afternoon. We began discussing the calendar for adult ed programs for the upcoming summer and there is potential for collaborating. We want to be able to give SCALE students access to labs at the high school. Experiential piece will be helpful for our adult learners as well. There is finally movement to get these students to access CTE spaces.
    - J Mancía: Bring together school, City, CTE, and SCALE, and potentially current municipal employees to discuss opportunities for collaboration.
    - J Clingan: I want to make sure we are addressing the initial ask from the community. City is understaffed in DPW and part of this is the pay for City labor positions. It is important that kids and adults are aware that these opportunities exist.
    - L Cook: It is a great idea to work backwards and see, what are the jobs available in DPW, what skills are needed, and how can we train for those skills in the CTE spaces.
    - V Choitz: Apprenticeships are formal, recognized registered programs with the U.S. Department of Labor. Alternatively, internships, co-ops, experiential learning models can be implemented much more easily and may be more applicable to this current situation. Experiential learning should be grounded in the skills currently demanded in the open jobs. Formalized understanding of what experience, credentials, etc. City should give priority to interviewing students for a City role, and this could be written into a contract.

- V Choitz: Let's review the specific request about the municipal apprenticeship program in our next meeting.
- V Choitz: This reminds of one idea, that perhaps came up after we made our priorities list for job training scholarships. Students who are able to access free programs, but need help with books, supplies, or whatever to help them succeed. This idea that Jenn and William are researching could be a nice complement to this idea.
- V Choitz: Next steps- J Mancina to coordinate meeting L Cook, T Bent, and new CTE Director to formalize talent pipeline into City jobs via experiential learning. It would be great for updates to be presented at the next meeting.
- R Wilson: We should contact Ed Halloran who initiated this idea
- J Mancina: Will connect with Ed Halloran
- T Bent: We should see if they can provide a written description of the specific idea.
- V Choitz: If it truly is a municipal apprenticeship, another idea is that this Board could commission a study to better understand what municipal apprenticeship models look like.

## 8. Workforce Rapid Response

- J Mancina: Workforce Development Rapid Response Strategy: Correlates to Strategy 4 of Talent Equity Playbook.
  - Purpose: to develop resiliency in responses to future of work.
  - Many of these services are already being provided by internal and external parties to businesses and individuals
  - Points of Entry: internal (City of Somerville departments- HHS, Economic Development, etc.), External (MassHire BizWorks, Community organizations providing wraparound services)
  - Case Mgr in HHS meets individual and makes referrals based on needs assessment
  - MassHire BizWorks: Provides tech assistances to individuals and businesses of all sizes at any point throughout the business life cycle.
  - We will be facilitating a meeting between MassHire BizWorks and Economic Development small business team to broaden awareness of technical support offerings.
  - T Galligani: I'm excited about building these relationships with Mass BizWorks. Is there focus on larger businesses
  - J Mancina: They can support businesses of any size from an individual up to Royal Hospitality
  - V Choitz: Can you provide a sense of how this system would work together to support workers in the concrete example of Royal Hospitality?
  - J Mancina: MassHire BizWorks is well connected to workforce development providers across the state.
  - V Choitz: So is the idea that if an employee loses their job, there is a network that they know they can access for resources if they cannot follow their employer to a new location.
  - R Wilson: We have to stay on top of what may be an inevitable serious job loss in our community.
  - T Galligani: We have a system in place if Royal announces they are leaving. What are we able to do in the meantime so that this does not end up as a crisis? So that residents have opportunities lined up in case their job may be lost?
  - J Mancina: We can step up outreach to Royal Hospitality workers. SCC has done this to an extent already.

- V Choitz: We are also funding through the JCRT great training and education opportunities for workers.
- T Bent: In the Inner Belt area, the company, Angelica does similar types of work. Do we know if they have hiring needs and if they could be a potential place that these workers could transition to?
- T Galligani: City staff will need to investigate this further.
- J Clingan: R Wilson and I recently learned that Angelica has been purchased by an out-of-state company that might not recognize the union.

#### 9. Next Meeting: to discuss

- W Blackmer: Does it work to hold again on 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, January 11<sup>th</sup> at 6PM. At that meeting we could discuss a recurring meeting schedule. If so, I will send a new invite for the Board.
- V Choitz: Do we want to continue virtually, or can we try-in person? I personally would be okay if individuals were vaccinated, wear masks, and if we find a physical space.
- T Galligani: City is still not hosting meetings in-person, aside from City Council meetings, which just started. We will monitor this and update the Board on our options.
- V Choitz: It sounds like January, at least will be virtual.
- T Galligani: Yes, we will have more clarity then, including hopefully the availability for the City Council schedule.
- V Choitz: We will keep this topic on future agendas. It is not on the agenda, but does anyone have topics to discuss that were not reasonably anticipated by the Chair? If not, can we get a motion to adjourn.

#### 10. Meeting Adjournment

- Motion: T Bent makes motion to adjourn. Motion seconded by C Moran
- Roll Call Vote: Motion passes 8-0 to adjourn. L Cook had to leave meeting before motion to adjourn.

#### Meeting Documents

- Draft Job Creation & Retention Trust Meeting Minutes 10.19.21
- Draft Job Creation & Retention Trust Meeting Minutes 11.09.21
- Link to Jam Board: [JCRT 2021 Public Discussion - Google Jamboard](#)
- December JCRT Memo

Meeting minutes approved on 1/11/2022.