

**MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board, Inc.
Youth Council Meeting, March 3, 2022
Zoom Meeting**

Voting Members Present:

Cleveland Burton - Chair	Haydee Lamberty-Rodriguez	Amy Scribner
Kecia Bossie	Malany Mendoza	Pamela Westmoreland
Paula Euber		

Others Present:

Ernest Abramian	Jules Gillis	Genesis Ortiz
Aliza Ansell	Candace Griffith	Katara Robinson
Peter Blain	Judith Kocik	Walter Rice
Gloria Crespo	Gladys Lebron-Martinez	Cheryl Sawicki
Yaritza Cruz-Baez	Maria Montero	Mishie Serrano
Dawn DiStefano	Zena Murray	Maryann Sullivan
William Dziura	Maggie Nugent	Shannon Yaremchak

MH Staff Present:

Christine Abramowitz	Amanda Medina
N'Tasia Meadows	Lani Small

Meeting Materials

Mailed Out: Agenda, Minutes of the October 14, 2021 meeting, YC Charter, FY23 WIOA Youth RFP Schedule, Proposed FY23 Governor State Budget

MINUTES OF MEETING

I. Welcome, Approval of Minutes

Youth Council Chair Cleveland Burton called the Zoom meeting to order at about 8:35 a.m. and roll call introductions were made. Newest MHHCWB staff members N'Tasia Meadows and Lani Small introduced themselves and were welcomed. Cleveland then acknowledged Mike Chechette for his long-time service prior to his retirement last December and then asked for a vote to approve the minutes from the last Youth Council meeting, which were sent out with the agenda.

- **Action Taken:** A motion to approve the minutes of the June October 14th meeting was made, seconded and approved.

II. Youth Council Charter Review

Christine Abramowitz provided a high-level overview of the Youth Council Charter document as required by our Board Governance Committee.

- **Action Taken:** A motion to approve the Youth Council Charter was made, seconded and approved.

III. Program Updates

A. WIOA Youth and FY23 RFP

Christine first noted that all the WIOA vendors, despite some continued challenges in recruitment in retention, are mostly more than halfway enrolled and 2 are fully enrolled. One challenge that was noted locally, especially by OSY partners, and was noted as an issue statewide, is competition with private sector businesses paying higher than minimum wage for even entry-level positions given their own issue with finding workers. She also noted that state 2nd QTR reports were just issued and our region is 77% enrolled against our plan for all youth, as compared to state-level averages of 47% and likewise we exceed state averages in our federal outcome measures. Lani also spoke of her 1:1 meetings with the vendors and noted they are all focused on their programs and that she will begin to hold regular monthly meetings again.

Christine next reviewed the steps in carrying out the new 2-Year WIOA RFP procurement including release of the RFP on March 1st. In talking about the proposal review process with voting YC members assistance Cleveland encouraged participation and that the review be held in-person this time around for maximum contribution and consideration. Christine will reach-out to members soon.

B. Connecting Activities/School to Career, YouthWorks

Christine Abramowitz reported out as follows:

- **Connecting Activities/School to Career** is also somewhat behind their goals but still doing well. The High School Senior Internship in Education Program (HSSIEP) is again running this year and we are working with 5 districts in that program. She also noted that she and N'Tasia are developing an employer engagement brochure as collateral for the CA/STC program and will share once final.
- **CommCorp YouthWorks Year-Round and Summer Programs** - Year Round is continuing and was provided with supplemental funding through June. The new RFR, which will cover both the upcoming Summer and new year-round program is due out any day. One big change is the age range is now up to 25 from 21 so we will need to consider different program interventions for those young adults which still need to meet YW eligibility requirements. It was suggested that, like under WIOA OSY, those in the older age range who are HS drop-outs be considered as eligible regardless of income so we will float that idea. She also noted the challenge of private sector wage competition will likely impact recruitment of this age group in YW as it does with WIOA. N'Tasia then shared her work with learning the program and working with our YW partners.

IV. Governor's Proposed FY 23 State Budget

Next Christine reviewed the Governor's proposed FY 23 budget which is mostly very generous to those line items that impact our young people and for which some line items will be supplemented by federal ARPA monies.

V. Discussion: Status of Return to In-Person Services, Masking Policies, Other Announcements

- MassHire Holyoke (Yaritza Cruz-Baez and Mishie Serrano) shared that they are open by appointment and also they have some new programming in the works working with middle school youth for career exploration activities and are participating in HSSIEP, via their partnership with Westfield Public Schools as well as looking to expand internship opportunities in that community more broadly.

- William Dziura announced that JA continues to offer many virtual services but is also launching a new initiative to honor student leaders in their region via the “18 Under 18” campaign for which they anticipate conducting interviews of nominees in April.
- Pamela Westmoreland noted STCC will continue their mask mandate and to provide mostly virtual services and that they also are still seeing young people come to the college less prepared as has happened during the pandemic.
- Zena Murray noted Square One continues to have a mask mandate at their day care facilities but have partnered with the South End Community Center to provide their WIOA youth services in a more flexible manner. They have also brought on a mental health clinician to support youth on a once a week basis.
- Cheryl Sawicki shared that Pathfinder has most of their WIOA ISY working and they are in the midst of planning for summer enrichment programming.
- Lastly, Gladys Lebron-Martinez noted in her position now with the housing organization where she has been at for about 1 year now that a recent tenant survey showed much interest in knowing about opportunities for jobs, education and training and other services and to please send her information at glebronmartinez@hmrproperties.com or to call her at 413-348-2768.

The meeting adjourned at about 9:45a.m. and Cleveland encouraged all to stay safe, be well and have a great Spring.

Note: Just after the meeting Gloria Crespo emailed that New North Citizens’ Council YouthBuild program, operating at 4 Bernie Ave. in Springfield is accepting enrollments for youth aged 16 to 24 and if anyone knows of possible candidates for the program which is both to assist in getting their HiSET/GED plus occupational skills to contact Isaiah Delmoral at 455-2132 ext.106.