

**Board of Directors: Quarterly Meeting**

September 18, 2025

8:30 – 10:00am

1441 Main Street  
Springfield, MA 01103

**Members Present**

W. Andino-Williams	E. Demetrion	J. Mitchell
C. Buono	K. Dunkleberg	E. O'Keefe
C. Burton	M. Galat	J. Sullivan
J. Cook	F. Grassetti	G. Timmons

**Others Present:** MassHire Staff

**Guests:** Ben Grande, Beverly Fein, Gene Palecco, Kate Smith, Kevin Lynn, Scott Latham, Carmen Ramirez

**Meeting Materials**

Emailed Out: Agenda, Draft Meeting Minutes March 19, 2025 & June 25, 2025, Executive Committee Report (Election of New Directors), FY'26 Budget Presentation, Guest Speaker-Bio-Scott Latham, Ph.D., President & CEO Report (FY'26 Annual Plan Executive Summary, Labor Market Snapshot, Funding Opportunities Update)

**I. Welcome and Board Business Items**

**A. Welcome and Announcements**

With Chair Samra absent, Peter Farkas called the meeting to order. Attendance was recorded, and a quorum was confirmed. To begin, all attendees went around the room and introduced themselves. A motion to accept the March 19, 2025 and June 25, 2025 meeting minutes was presented.

- **Action Taken:** A motion to accept the minutes as presented from both the March 19, 2025 & June 25, 2025 meetings was seconded and approved.

**II. Executive Committee Report**

Peter Farkas presented the Executive Committee report.

**A. Election of New Directors**

Peter discussed the candidacy of Benjamin Grande and Beverly Fein as new board members. He stated the Governance Committee, the Executive Committee unanimously voted to recommend to the MHCWB Board of Directors

- **Action Taken:** A motion to elect Benjamin Grande, Owner and General Manager of Meridian Industrial Group and Beverly Fein, Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Office of Holyoke Medical Center and Valley Health Systems as a MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board – Board of Directors for a term of

October 1, 2025 through December 31, 2027 was Seconded and Approved.

**B. Strategic Planning Committee**

A report was provided on the progress of the Strategic Plan through the fourth quarter of FY'25. It was noted the Strategic Plan entered its third and final year on July 1, 2025. Development of the next Strategic Plan will begin in early 2026 with full board approval anticipated at the June 2026 quarterly meeting.

**C. FY'26 Annual Plan**

Peter continued with his presentation of the Executive Summary for the FY'26 Annual Plan. He explained that each year an Annual Operational Plan must be submitted to the MassHire Department of Career Services (MHDCS). The Annual Plan was submitted to the MHDCS on September 4<sup>th</sup>.

**III. FY'26 Preliminary Budget**

Diana Carr proceeded to provide an overview of the FY'25 fourth quarter financials which were reviewed and approved by both the Finance/Audit Committee and Executive Committee.

In addition, she provided an overview of the preliminary FY'26 budget, highlighting comparisons with the FY'25 budget. She detailed the projected expenses and revenues for FY'26 and noted reductions in several core state and federal line items. Peter emphasized that the Board will continue to seek additional funding opportunities throughout the year to supplement the budget.

- **Action Taken:** A motion to ratify the FY'26 preliminary budget, as presented and approved by the Finance/Audit Committee and the Executive Committee, was seconded and approved.

**IV. Guest Speaker: Scott Latham, Ph.D.**

**Topic: Preparing for the AI Economy**

Next, Peter introduced Dr. Scott Latham, a professor at UMass Lowell's Manning School of Business, who joined the meeting to present on *Preparing for the AI Economy*. Dr. Latham discussed the transformative impact of artificial intelligence on the workforce, emphasizing the importance of upskilling and adapting business strategies to thrive in an AI-driven economy.

Dr. Latham's presentation focused on the AI Wave, Emerging Research on AI Adoption, his thoughts on Preparing Companies, and Preparing Workers. He noted that predictions of the impact of AI workforce are all over the map, but AI spending is projected to reach trillions by 2030 and will affect work unevenly. He presented on his research and observations about how AI will impact the healthcare, life science, manufacturing, software, construction, and insurance industries.



## HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE BOARD

Dr. Latham engaged the board in a discussion on how their organizations are approaching AI, including developing AI strategies, supporting employee adaptation, and determining ownership of AI initiatives.

Dr. Latham addressed common misconceptions about AI and the workforce, noting that workers do not need to be AI experts and emphasizing the importance of being AI comfortable. He discussed the myth of the “AI-proof” career and explored approaches to supporting mid-career displaced workers, including AI reskilling versus general skill development.

He highlighted that the 21st century will see the largest workforce composition shift in history and emphasized that there are no true AI experts. He noted that AI adoption will occur differently in every organization and will evolve slowly and unpredictably. He encouraged experimenting, learning from failures, and sharing insights. Scott stressed that institutions, policy groups, and agencies have a responsibility to provide reasoned career guidance, and that AI retraining will require collaboration across companies, universities, colleges, primary education, and workforce organizations.

### V. **President & CEO Report**

Peter provided an overview of current grant projects, including awarded amounts, proposals, and goals in process. The projects highlighted include:

- YouthWorks
- Western Mass Advanced Manufacturing
- Connecting Activities
- Grants for Registered Apprenticeship Opportunities in Workforce (GROW)
- Youth Employment Gateway Cities Pilot

Peter continued his presentation by providing an overview of U.S. Department of Labor and key state funding line items for FY’26, including a comparison with the prior two fiscal years.

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:03am.