

**Board of Directors: Quarterly Meeting**

Zoom Meeting  
 March 19, 2026  
 8:30 – 10:00am

**Members Present**

Cathy Buono	John Mitchell	Fiore Grassetti	Ed O’Keefe
Cleveland Burton	Beverly Fein	Susan Kasa	Angie Grant
Dan Butterfield	Michael Galat	Gina Kos	Kermit Dunkelberg
Mark Cress	Ben Grande	Kathy Martin	Jeffrey Sullivan
Ellen Cummings	George Timmons	Gene Palecco	Meredith Wise

**Guests:** Nicholas Scutella, Esther Santos-Irizary, Kevin Lynn, Kate Smith, Zainab Farzad & Fraidoon Farzad

**Others Present:** MassHire Staff

**Meeting Materials**

Emailed Out: Agenda; Draft Meeting Minutes - December 11, 2025; Executive Committee Report; Vision & Mission Statement Proposals, Career Center Spotlight; Healthcare Hub Overview; President & CEO Report (Regional Layoffs, Youth Employment Summit, WIOA Youth Providers Procurement, FY’27 State Budget Priorities, Funding Opportunities Update); Additional Materials (Massachusetts AI Skills Initiative, 2026 Meeting Schedule).

**I. Welcome and Board Business Items**

**Welcome and Announcements**

Chair Jeff Sullivan called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and welcomed the Board of Directors. Attendance was recorded, and it was noted that a quorum was present. A motion to accept the December 11, 2025 meeting minutes was presented.

- **Action Taken:** A motion to accept the minutes as presented from the December 11, 2025 meeting was seconded and approved.

**II. Executive Committee Report**

Chair Jeff Sullivan presented the Executive Committee report.

**A. Finance & Audit Committee**

An overview of the FY’26 second quarter financials was presented noting most income and expenses were in line with expectations.

**B. Governance Committee – Election of New Directors**

Peter Farkas presented to the Board two prospective new Board Members who had been recommended by both the Governance Committee and the Executive

Committee for consideration for appointment to the Board of Directors.

Name	Title	Organization
Nicholas Scutella	VP, HR Operation & Total Rewards	Baystate Health
Aaron Vega	President & CEO	Western Mass Economic Development Council (EDC)

- **Action Taken:** A motion to elect Nicholas Scutella, Vice President of HR Operations & Total Rewards at Baystate Health and Aaron Vega, President & CEO at the Western Mass Economic Development Council as MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board- Board of Directors for a term of April 1, 2026 through December 31, 2028 was *Seconded and Approved.*

### C. Strategic Planning Committee

#### a) Proposed New Vision and Mission Statements

As part of the development of the new Strategic Plan, the Strategic Planning Committee and the Executive Committee reviewed, discussed, and unanimously voted to recommend to the MHHCWB Board of Directors the adoption of revised Vision and Mission Statements. The Board reviewed the proposed revised Mission and Vision Statements as noted below:

#### **Proposed Mission Statement:**

The MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board leads an employer-driven workforce system that aligns education, training, community organizations and employment partners to connect individuals to quality jobs and career pathways that advance economic mobility.

#### **Proposed Vision Statement**

The MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board leads a workforce system that expands access and opportunity for employers and job seekers while driving economic growth and community development.

- **Action Taken:** A motion to approve the adoption of the proposed Vision Statement for the organization as presented was *Seconded and Approved.*
- **Action Taken:** A motion to approve the adoption of the proposed Mission Statement for the organization as presented was *Seconded and Approved.*

### III. Career Center Spotlights

Kevin Lynn, Executive Director of MassHire Springfield and Kate Smith, President of MassHire Holyoke were introduced to provide updates at their respective Career Centers.

#### **Kevin Lynn – MassHire Springfield Career Center**

Kevin Lynn provided highlights from his presentation:

- Noted the number of job postings/openings has declined, while the center continued to serve a consistent number of employers.
- Reported a 45% increase in views of online videos, including content focused on empathy and compassion, interviewing and discussing compensation, moving past job loss, and managing financial stress. Three of the four most-viewed topics related to the emotional impacts of job loss.
- Shared that three large job expos were held at the Basketball Hall of Fame. In October, there were 53 employers and 600 job seekers; in February, there were 46 employers and 568 job seekers. Attendance trends indicate strong and sustained demand for employment services.
- Noted that the next job expo is scheduled for May 18, 2026.

#### **Kate Smith – MassHire Holyoke Career Center**

Kate Smith provided highlights from her presentation:

- Reported that two technology grant applications were submitted and awarded
- The first grant, through the Alliance for Digital Equity, will support an enhanced public Wi-Fi system, which is expected to be implemented in the coming weeks.
- The second grant will fund new technology, including 60 laptops, 40 Chromebooks, and three smart boards, anticipated for delivery in April. These resources will improve referrals, tracking, and workshop delivery for WIOA and DTA case management, and will enhance space utilization for the Recovery and Reentry Team.
- Shared that the Career Center is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> year anniversary and will host an evening celebration event on April 30<sup>th</sup>.

#### **IV. Quarterly Highlight: Healthcare Hub**

Jennifer Murphy, Director of the Workforce Competitive Trust Fund at Commonwealth Corporation, was introduced and provided a high-level overview of the statewide Healthcare Hubs initiative.

Jennifer shared that Commonwealth Corporation remains committed to supporting workforce development efforts across the Commonwealth, with a focus on sustaining and strengthening Healthcare Hub initiatives. She highlighted the initiative's emphasis on building regional capacity to address workforce shortages, conducting ongoing workforce demand assessments, and expanding access to healthcare and behavioral health training opportunities.

Looking ahead, she discussed plans to convene healthcare and behavioral health grant recipients to share best practices and develop sustainability strategies. She also noted the potential for additional funding opportunities through existing Healthcare Hub resources, Workforce Skills Cabinet initiatives, and future Donnelly Grant procurements.

**Local Impact** Peter continued with a presentation on the local impact of the Healthcare Hub initiative, highlighting the 21 partner organizations involved, including employers, colleges, training providers, and workforce development organizations.

He reviewed enrollment data for the four primary healthcare career pathways being supported in the Pioneer Valley: EMT (68 participants), Medical Assistant (82 participants), Certified Nursing Assistant (42 participants), and Behavioral Health Associate (12 participants). Peter also shared participant demographic information, including age, community of residence, race, and educational attainment.

**Participant Success Stories** Peter introduced Esther Santos-Irizarry, Director of Career Counseling Services at the MassHire Holyoke Career Center, who presented two Healthcare Hub participants, Zainab Farzad and Fraidoon Farzad, who successfully completed training and are now employed in at Holyoke Medical Center.

Esther shared that the participants were referred through the Transitional Assistance Program as part of the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) program. She facilitated a discussion with the participants regarding their experiences with the Healthcare Hub initiative, the support services they received, and the impact the program had on their training and employment outcomes.

The participants expressed appreciation for the opportunities provided through the Healthcare Hub and shared how the program helped them achieve their career goals.

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

Peter continued with his President & CEO Report, highlighting current labor market trends, workforce initiatives, and funding opportunities.

He reviewed December 2025 labor force and unemployment data, noting an increase in labor force participation compared to the previous year, accompanied by a rise in unemployment. Peter also presented data on unique job postings over the previous 12 months, including 4,467 unique job postings in February 2026, and reviewed the most frequently posted job titles and industries with the highest demand.

He provided an update on major layoffs in the region and noted that one employer, CCRC, had recently recalled approximately 160 furloughed employees. Peter indicated that recent layoffs are expected to increase demand for Career Center services and reported that staff are coordinating with Rapid Response teams and state partners to assist affected workers. He also shared that the organization is exploring a National Dislocated Worker Grant through the U.S. Department of Labor to support individuals impacted by layoffs.

Peter announced that, in collaboration with the MassHire Career Centers, Big Y, Holyoke Medical Center, the Springfield Regional Chamber, and the Cities of Springfield and Holyoke, a Youth Employment Summit and Job Fair would be held on April 15 at the Basketball Hall of Fame.

He also provided an overview of the FY'27 State Budget, highlighting several workforce-related line items and ongoing efforts to increase funding levels. Peter concluded by sharing updates on current and pending funding opportunities and announced that information would be distributed regarding the Massachusetts AI Skills Initiative, a free AI and career certificate training program available to Massachusetts residents through Grow with Google and the Massachusetts AI Hub.

**VI. Adjourn**

Chair Jeff Sullivan thanked the Board members and guests for their participation. With no further business to come before the Board, a motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.