

Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board  
**Communication, Advocacy and Oversight Committee**

March 11, 2005  
**Minutes**

**WIB Members Present**

Patricia Brady  
Gary Christensen  
Greg Lambert  
Tom Macy  
Jackie Mlynarczyk  
Willie Nesbit  
Phil Saari

**Members Absent**

Bill Fritts  
Deborah Montgomery EA  
Paul Nelson EA

**Staff/Guests Present**

Kitty Gogins, WIB CEO  
Kate Bates, WIB Staff  
Readus Fletcher, City of Saint Paul  
Jim Schultz, DEED  
Terry Zurn, Workforce Solutions

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**Call to Order**

Greg Lambert, chair, called the meeting to order at 11:33 p.m.

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**Approve Minutes**

**Motion** made by Tom Macy with second by Willie Nesbit to approve the minutes of February 22 as written.

**Motion passed**

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**Approve Support of County Vision Including Mobile Workforce Centers**

This discussion was divided into discussion on the budget of running the WorkForce Centers (WFCs) and Kitty's learning from NAWB on mobile workforce centers.

**WorkForce Centers Facilities Budget (Program and Common Space)**

The WFC's core partners gathered budget information on running the current three workforce centers, including common space. In order to compare "apples to apples," the space occupied by Workforce Solutions was taken out of the equation for the North Saint Paul center, because this is administrative space that is not included in any of the other centers. On average, the centers cost \$14.985 per square foot, and the space in Midway and Downtown equal the space in North Saint Paul (minus the administrative offices). For planning purposes, the following criteria were used to estimate the cost of a new "super center": \$14/square foot, with \$5/square foot build out costs for first five years, for a total of \$19/square foot; 21,250 square feet needed (based on 250 square feet/staff and 85 staff); projected rent of \$403,750/year. It is expected that there will be partners renting space in the new location that will offset costs (ex. HIRED, rehab services, day care, retail partner) There are several "unknowns" in this estimate. These are things like partners in the new center, cost of moving, cost of infrastructure (i.e. phone system), and sustained funding (know we can afford this now, but maybe not in 18 months). It was suggested that we may try and find space that can be expanded as it is needed.

**Learning from NAWB**

Kitty Gogins attended the National Association of Workforce Boards conference in early March. There she visited a mobile workforce center and gathered more information on their operation to help the CAO committee make a decision on this issue. Kitty spoke with three WSAs with mobile units. The average cost of start-up is \$280,000-\$300,000, with \$125,000-\$150,000/year for operating costs (this includes personnel). To offset these costs, funding assistance could come through grants, partnering and advertising businesses on the unit. It was suggested to Kitty that the center be operational six days per week and follow a planned schedule with specific services, as opposed to showing up in a parking lot and being "available." The two biggest concerns are the funding and the efficiency of the money spent. The cost of the mobile center is estimated at \$21-\$42/person, versus \$9/person in a brick and mortar center. It seems that these units work best in rural areas where centers are often very far away. The satellite used for internet connection must have exposure to the southern sky, which would be a problem in downtown Saint Paul.

## **Discussion**

Members of the committee suggested that the WIB focus its efforts on the consolidation of the Midway and Downtown WorkForce Centers, and from there brainstorm ways to connect with the community to fill other needs. With regards to the mobile unit, ideas suggested were to partner with MNSCU institutions, U of M, the City, or Community Based Organizations in specific neighborhoods. The consensus on mobile centers was not to pursue a mobile unit individually as the workforce programs, but to look at it with other groups down the road. Patricia will talk with the MN Workforce Council Association (MWCA) and see if there is any interest in partnering.

**Motion** made by Tom Macy with second by Phil Saari to not pursue the mobile WFC individually as the Ramsey County WIB, but to revisit with other interested partners willing to incur some of the expense.

Friendly amendment made by Greg Lambert to change the phrase “WIB” to “workforce programs.” Tom Macy and Phil Saari agreed.

### **Motion carried**

Patricia Brady abstained

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## **Approve 2004 WIB Annual Report**

The committee reviewed the WIB’s 2004 Annual Report. Minor wording changes were made. The Marketing and Advocacy committee was thanked for their efforts on the report.

**Motion** made by Tom Macy with second by Gary Christensen to approve the WIB’s 2004 Annual Report as modified by the CAO committee.

### **Motion carried**

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## **Discuss MWCA Minimum WorkForce Center Standards**

The state is looking at changing the strategic plans of the WFCs, including changing the minimum standards for what is considered a “MN WorkForce Center.” The MWCA distributed a draft of the very minimum requirements for a center; each WIB would be expected to make decisions from this point. The committee was asked to review these standards and provide feedback. All agreed that these were acceptable as very bottom line standards, but that we would expect our centers in Ramsey County to perform significantly above this level. These standards may come in to play when seeking funds for WFC infrastructure.

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## **Open Forum**

The committee discussed the potential 2/3 cut of Adult Basic Education (ABE) in the president’s budget, which is 20%-25% of the total budget for Minnesota’s ABE programs. This is potentially very bad for our community because there are already 400 Hmong refugees on a waiting list to receive ELL services, funded by ABE. Tom Cytron-Hysom from the Saint Paul Community Literacy Consortium is drafting a letter to try and get state funds to help fill this gap. He will send this to the WIB and WIB staff will distribute the letter to members for them to send to their senators and representatives.

It was also discussed that the governor is cutting poverty programs in Saint Paul and Minneapolis and redistributing these funds to suburban schools. It was suggested that members also contact the governor about this redistribution.

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## **Adjourn**

**Motion** made by Tom Macy with second by Willie Nesbit to adjourn the meeting at 1:02 p.m.

### **Motion carried**

**Next Meeting-** May 13, Midway WorkForce Center