

Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board
Market-Driven Workforce System Committee

July 14, 2005
Minutes

Members Present

Craig Anderson
Kirk Hayes
Nancy Hendrickson
Scott LeMire
Lorrie Louder
Mary McKee
John Mohr
Ginny Sullivan
Joe Richburg

Members Absent

John Evans
Phil Hanson
Hyon Kim
Jerry McElroy EA
Tené Wells
William Yang

Staff/Guests Present

Mary Jo Gardner, WIB CEO
Kate Bates, WIB Staff
Patricia Brady, WIB Member

Call to Order

Ginny Sullivan, chair, called the meeting to order at 1:07 pm.

Approve Minutes

Motion made by Nancy Hendrickson with second by Craig Anderson to approve the minutes of March 10 as written.

Motion carried.

Discuss Sheraton Hotel Closing

Lorrie Louder from the Saint Paul Port Authority was present to discuss the Sheraton Hotel closing. She gave background information on the Port Authority and their structure. One piece of their business is to have a fiduciary role in the “876 Bond Fund” that holds defaulted properties in Saint Paul. The Sheraton was one of the properties included in this bond, and it was the role of the Port Authority to do the best they could for the bond holders, as well as the employees of the Sheraton. This space has not worked well as a hotel. The Target Corporation offered the highest bid for the property when it was put up for sale, and they will be the new owners. The Port and Employer Solutions, Inc (ESI) has had a large role in making sure the employees of the hotel have a good chance at success after the hotel closes. Aside from paid, on-site dislocated worker services, the employees are guaranteed a job through September 30, and possibly one month after that, they will have six months paid health benefits and severance pay of one week per every year of service to the hotel. Janet Ludden from ESI will be at a future meeting to further discuss their efforts.

Update on ELL Grants

The Ramsey County WIB was awarded close to \$140K to distribute for employer-focused ELL services in Ramsey County. We have awarded grants to Marsden Building Maintenance and MDI and have approximately \$73K left to award. Based on discussion with service providers, we don't think we will have a problem spending the entire allotment. There was a question on whether or not more funding will be coming for this, or a similar, project. Nancy Hendrickson will check if there is and get back to us.

Update on Business Services Pilot

The business services pilot is coming to an end and the discussion is turning to where the efforts should go from here. The final report from the pilot will be presented at the October WIB meeting. Next steps right now are looking at best practices, how they can be used in the future, and how to coordinate the various staff that had worked on this project. There is a desire for DEED and all other partners to remain connected to this issue as it moves forward.

Discuss Mobile WorkForce Center

Commissioner Parker heard about mobile resource rooms last year and was very interested in the concept. All of the Commissioners have become interested and have requested that the County and WIB look into this possibility. The CAO committee has reviewed some information and is interested in looking further into the possibility of a mobile center, though they would like to focus on the consolidation at this time. Based on this, it makes sense that this committee take up the issue.

Patricia Brady was present from Ramsey County Workforce Solutions to discuss the mobile centers. She has visited one and was very impressed with its capabilities- it had 12 work stations with computers hooked up to the internet, a screen in front for distance learning, a projector and a private interview area. The center she toured was funded by a grant, and the general idea was that we could get similar funding- the Commissioners did not want funding to be the reason we didn't pursue a mobile center. It is also thought that this may help pick up some of the slack caused in the center consolidation.

The group reviewed the document prepared for the Commissioners on the subject- it outlines basic needs for the center, as well as how they are being used throughout the country. Many of these centers are located in warm climates and there was concern that our region may be too cold to have a mobile unit. Possible uses discussed were training employees on their work site, using it with youth and the elderly who may not be able to get out to workforce centers, and to use at job fairs. The cost is thought to be around \$300K for startup and \$150K/year for maintenance. The group also discussed the importance of getting partners to offset the direct costs of the center.

Discussions on the plausibility of the mobile center focused on the cost effectiveness. The group wanted to know if there were more cost effective ways to use funds and serve our community. It was felt that the mobile unit may depreciate faster than we would like, and it would be good to know about how long it would last. There was also concern that our county, being small and urban, may not have as much use for it as other areas. The use of a tractor-trailer type center was suggested- it would be bigger and could be dropped off at a location for longer use. The group agreed that a business plan needs to be developed, analyzing what the needs of the community are and what this unit would need to do to become cost effective for our county.

Nominate Chair and Vice Chair positions

John Mohr nominated Scott LeMire for the Chair positions, and was seconded by Kirk Hayes.

Motion made by Mary McKee with second by Kirk Hayes to close the Chair nominations.

Motion carried

There was discussion on whether the Vice-Chair needed to be a business member, and the group agreed it was not an issue. Many members were suggested for the Vice-Chair position, all showing little interest. Kirk Hayes volunteered for the position.

Motion made by Mary McKee with second by John Mohr to close the Vice-Chair nominations.

Motion carried

Elect Chair and Vice Chair positions

The committee unanimously voted to accept Scott LeMire and Kirk Hayes as the Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, of the Workforce Committee.

Open Forum

Mary McKee discussed the collaborative grant she had been working on in the healthcare sector for an RFP put out by the DOL. Craig Anderson informed the group that the second half of this RFP (which Mary's grant was going after) would not be funded.

Ginny Sullivan was thanked for all of her work as Chair of this committee.

Ginny Sullivan and Mary Jo Gardner were at a meeting earlier today at the Mayor's office regarding an east metro broad sector workforce initiative.

There was further discussion on the Business Services Pilot. The group felt it was very important to keep moving forward with the project and carry forward the best practices. It was suggested the WIB take a strong lead in this project and keep it on the agenda in this committee for further study. This also led to discussion on the sustainability of funds for a program- this is something that should be addressed before the project starts- not at the end of the funding. Susan Speetzen will discuss later a grant she is working on for intercultural healthcare. This discussion also led to the work of this committee. There was concern that this group did not have enough to do, and didn't have many action items.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned, upon completion of the agenda, at 2:25 p.m.

Next Meeting- September 8, 1:00-2:30, Conley Conference Room, Midway Hospital