

Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board
Youth Council Meeting

July 23, 2009

Members Present

Billy Collins
Doug Hubbard
Peter Jessen-Howard
Becky Johnson
David MacKenzie
Dean Shawbold
Jody Yungers

Members Absent

Abe Hassan
Sheldon Jensen
Dale Maristuen
Rick Polanski

Staff/Guests Present

Mary Jo Gardner, WIB Staff
Kate Raleigh, WIB Staff
Carli Stark, WIB Staff
Kari Finseth, Under Construction Participant
Dwayne Green, Workforce Solutions
Ethan Laubach, Under Construction
Maia Meusbarger, Under Construction Participant
David Sannes, DJS Construction Services
Pat Wagner, Construction Careers Foundation

Call to Order

David MacKenzie called the meeting to order at 3:34pm.

Approve Minutes

Motion made by Jody Yungers with second by Billy Collins to approve the June minutes as presented.

Motion carried.

Update on Building Lives

Mary Jo gave an update on the latest Building Lives ad hoc meeting. It was determined that seeking funds through both Corrections and DEED was beneficial to passing the bill because it increased visibility of the program. The funding will be increasingly more difficult to obtain because it will likely be pulled from the funding that is distributed to the workforce service areas throughout the state.

Our goals for 2010 will be to find funding to replace approximately \$125,000 that will not be available to the program next year. This year that amount came from stimulus dollars and a grant from the Otto Bremer Foundation.

The suggestion was made that a presentation on Building Lives be given to the Youth Council at an upcoming meeting. In order to make decisions on spending, the Youth Council needs information on what has been done with the money approved for the program. Workforce Solutions and HIRED would be willing to give a presentation on the outcomes so far. In addition, the information that was given to the legislators will be provided to the Youth Council.

Time will be allotted at the October meeting to discuss the Building Lives information as well as revisit the priorities and role of the Youth Council and discuss the Strategic Plan objectives as they relate to the Youth Council.

Members discussed offender re-entry, recidivism rates and the lack of employers that will hire ex-offenders. Focusing on these issues would fit with the strategic plan by connecting businesses with workforce activity.

Next Youth Council Meeting

Discussion was held concerning the August Youth Council meeting.

At the October meeting, the Youth Council's response to the new strategic plan will be discussed. Background materials will be distributed at the September meeting.

The meeting in September will take place at the Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps.

Motion made by Dean Shawbold with second by Doug Hubbard to cancel the August Youth Council meeting.

Motion carried.

Tamarack Nature Center

Jody Yungers welcomed the Youth Council to the Tamarack Nature Center and introduced Mary Vidas, Director of the Nature Center, and Pat Wagner, Executive Director of Construction Career Foundation.

Mary Vidas gave a presentation on the Tamarack Nature Center. It is comprised of 320 acres and has grown since its inception in 1987. They strive to connect children and families to nature using things like eco-art, the discovery of adventure with arts and nature. They provide a safe place for families to take their children to learn and grow.

Ramsey County has made a \$13 million commitment to support the Nature Center in an upcoming expansion. The features will be geared towards children as well as adults. The children's features will include a new outdoor wild place and play area for children that will incorporate manufactured and natural components, a garden for children and a nature preschool. The adult features will include an event and education center, an art gallery, and a dirty classroom. The construction has started and will provide jobs for multiple groups of people.

A question was raised about the Nature Center's relationship with White Bear Township. The Township is supportive of the Nature Center and will need to approve the construction plans before construction commences.

Pat Wagner, Executive Director of Construction Careers Foundation, described the Under Construction Program. The program was designed five years ago by a group of employers looking at a mechanism to educate the emerging workforce about construction as a career choice. It normally runs eight weeks long employing about 40 students, but because of budget restrictions has been reduced this year. In total, there have been 171 youth, representing 7 schools that went through an application and interview process to be involved with the program. While in the program, the students learn math, financial literacy, and work readiness. Over eighteen percent of the participants have been female, whereas the industry only employs about four percent women.

Under Construction is funded through education, foundations, government and industry partners. 60-65% of participants choose construction as a career choice. The program facilitators are looking at making the transition from high school to the workplace smoother.

Two of the program participants spoke about their experiences and the positive influence Under Construction has had on them. The main project they worked on was tearing out the old boardwalk at the Nature Center and replacing it with a new one made of recycled plastic bags. They both highlighted that they had not previously known all that the construction industry entailed and learned a lot through the program.

A tour was conducted of the Tamarack Nature Center to see the work the Under Construction crew has done.

The Youth Council thanks the participants for sharing their experiences and commends them on their accomplishment.

Adjourn

Motion made by Dean Shawbold with second by Peter Jessen-Howard to adjourn the meeting at 5:57pm.

Motion carried.

Next Meeting: September 24, 2009