



City of Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust Monthly Meeting

Vickie Choitz, Managing Trustee
Anika Van Eaton, Co-Manager
Trustees
Thomas Bent
Lisa Cook
Silvana Dinka
Colleen Moran
Rachel Nadkarni
JT Scott
Rand Wilson

Meeting Minutes

Location: Online via GoToWebinar Platform

Date: July 19, 2022

Time: 6:07 PM

Attendance

- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Lisa Cook, Rachel Nadkarni, and Anika Van Eaton
- Economic Development Staff: Jennifer Mancina, William Blackmer

Meeting Minutes

- V Choitz: Meeting called to order at 6:08pm. Quorum established with 5 trustees in attendance.
- W Blackmer: House rules about technology delivered.

1. V Choitz: Board Membership Update – Welcome, Rachel Nadkarni

Earlier this month, Mayor Ballantyne named Rachel Nadkarni as her interim designee to the Job Creation and Retention Trust, occupying the seat Tom Galligani has served in (Mayor's designee to the JCRT). This designation will be in effect while both Rachel and Tom are in acting/interim roles in OSPCD (as Director of Economic Development and Executive Director, respectively).

Rachel Nadkarni has been working in the Economic Development Division as the Senior Planner – Urban Revitalization Specialist since April 2021. In that role, she has been facilitating the implementation of projects in Boynton Yards, Union Square, and Brickbottom neighborhoods and leading the community engagement efforts around implementing the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan and determining the future of city owned properties in Gilman Square. Before joining the City of Somerville, Rachel spent a year in Berlin, Germany as a German Chancellor Fellow studying municipal curbside management policy. She has a total of 8 years of experience in municipal planning departments; in addition to her time in Somerville, she worked 4 years with the City of Newton and two years in Connecticut. Welcome, Rachel!

I will now ask Board Members to briefly introduce themselves and the roles they serve on the Trust.

V. Choitz: Losing a member, Lisa Cook has resigned and this will be her last meeting.

L. Cook: This has been an amazing process. I have never been on a board or committee with such thoughtful conversations. It's been almost 5 years and have decided to return to the nonprofit sector. Thank you all. I look forward to working with all of you. It would be amazing to have a teen innovation lab in Somerville and hope this is just a see you later and not a formal goodbye.

T. Bent: It's a big loss to Somerville. There are a lot of changes, but wish Lisa luck.

A Van Eaton: Have appreciated how student centered you are. You have shifted the conversation of what we do and how appreciative I am to have worked with you. It sounds like such a great opportunity.

V. Choitz: You were so good about bringing challenging topics. I really appreciate your work.

2. V Choitz: Review and Approval of June 21 Meeting Minutes

- Motion: T Bent makes motion to approve June 21, 2022 meeting minutes. A. Van Eaton seconds the motion.
- Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 5-0 approving June 21 meeting minutes.

3. W. Blackmer: reviewed Estimated Linkage Fees for 2022 and 2023

Review Received and Estimated Linkage Fees for 2022

Since our last meeting, we received the second linkage payment from the development at 515 Somerville Ave – Cambria Hotel. The Trust currently has approximately \$179,000 in available funds. Over \$2M in additional funding is expected to be received by the end of the calendar year.

V. Choitz: Will hold off on votes until have built up more funds.

4. W. Blackmer: Review Current Status of Investment Priorities and Discuss Evaluation Committee Recommendations

- #1) Industry-Specific Trainings
 - i.AACA and Per Scholas: City staff are finalizing grant services agreements with both AACA and Per Scholas. Between these two service providers, 35 Somerville residents will be trained over the next year.
- #2) Childcare Career Advancement Initiative
 - i.Next Steps: Unfortunately, we did not receive any responses to this section of the RFP. One reason for this could be that we released the RFP at the beginning of the summer when potential applicants may have been away from the office. Additionally, these potential applicants continue to face staffing challenges related to the pandemic and the tight labor market which limit capacity to respond to RFPs.

The subcommittee will be meeting to discuss next steps, including reaching out to potentially interested parties to learn more about their interest in this idea and considering re-releasing this RFP later. We are open to other ideas that any Trustee would like to share.

A. Van Eaton: It makes sense to reconvene. Maybe we can explore extending the timeline the RFP is posted.

- #4) Contextualized education for adult and English language learners
 - i.BHCC: Since the last meeting, I shared with the Board the final report related to BHCC's ESOL agreement that concluded on July 1, 2022. As funds arrive, based on this report, City Staff advise the Trust to continue funding contextualized ESOL in the upcoming year and consider scaling up slots to match the demonstrated demand for these services.

V. Choitz: Missed the report. William, please resend the report.

W. Blackmer: Will resend the report.

5. W. Blackmer: Planning Timeline for Annual Report and Annual Public Meeting

This Timeline gives a preview of the next 5 months and the corresponding steps being taken related to the Annual Meeting and Report, our Ranked Investment Priorities process, and awarding funds. For August, prepare and share draft of annual report. Begin discussing format for annual meeting. September will focus on formalizing final steps for meeting in October. In August will look at combined list of ideas including ideas not funded. In September the board will rank the tentative list. In October the trust will present the tentative list to the public and receive public feedback. Pause for any questions.

V. Choitz: Any questions or thoughts.

A. Van Eaton: No questions. Very clear.

L. Cook: I have decided that my replacement at SCALE will be submitting the updated year two proposal.

6. V. Choitz: Review of Talent Equity Playbook Strategies and Generate New Ideas List Want to gather any ideas. William has put together a Jam Board.

W. Blackmer: I have created a Jamboard, [Generating New Investment Ideas 2022-23](#), for the next part of our agenda. I will give an overview of the four Talent Equity Playbook Strategies that guide the Board's investment priorities and mention preliminary new ideas that have been generated. We then invite the Board Members to add other new ideas to the Jamboard via a virtual sticky note, comment in the chat, or verbal comment.

A. Van Eaton: Process clarifying question. Is now the right time to capture ideas from the past that we would like to include?

W. Blackmer: That will be a conversation for August. Today we are focusing on new ideas.

V. Choitz: In past years we have had someone do labor market information report. We want to be data driven and want to make sure we are addressing what is in demand in the market.

W. Blackmer: I want to note that our Economic Development Division is currently undergoing a Linkage Nexus study. This study will include projections for industries that are growing and tied to projected development in Somerville.

L. Cook: A lot of students with higher literacy were able to access jobs on their own. Students reading 0 to second grade stayed in classes in hopes that they could improve their English level skills. There was a need and it showed in our outcomes to serve students in career readiness journey, but not ready to enter the job market. We served the students, but couldn't meet the grant requirements. Career readiness skills. Another one is a monthly pop in with employers and job training providers. If there is a way to bring folks together and make it topical. It would be so helpful.

V. Choitz: Speed dating event; connect adult education and workforce development providers. We could consider a model that connects our adult education and training providers with employers.

T. Bent: Advanced Manufacturing program. A lot of young people were not ready for the math aspect. They were tested ahead of time to create a pre class in preparation to enter the program. Maybe this is something the trust can look at. Address the needs of students who are in the preliminary phase and need pre training. Each program would be different, but it would be interesting to speak with the providers to understand the gaps. Other obstacles might be a driver's license for some trades.

L. Cook: Driver's Ed program used to be shared between school and SCALE. The problem was mixing the ages. It wasn't a safe environment. It's something that we can revive but needs to be two separate programs. A lot of students are not moving into training is, because of documentation. Maybe there is a way of backing up and focusing on free legal services. It's limited it's a volunteer group, maybe that's another option.

T. Bent: Will talk to the high school about driver's ed.

W. Blackmer: In interest of time will move to strategy 2: Position Somerville as a leader in employee engagement practices. One idea that has been generated is around mental health and trauma and resilience for providers.

L. Cook: The idea to run training for municipal job vacancies is innovative. I don't know of any other municipality doing that. I think that's huge and worth highlighting.

W. Blackmer: For strategy 3: build a full suite of experiential learning. Would anyone like to add anything?

R. Nadkarni: We have all these new buildings going up and as employers come in, I can see two opportunities. In strategy 3 setting up tours for individuals who are in exploratory stages of career awareness. On the employer side having a moment of setting the relationship the moment they arrive. Providing an orientation of these companies to the JCRT.

T. Bent: The Chamber of Commerce is working with the school superintendent. The business community wanted to create a relationship. For example: DLJ just had high school students learn about jobs available at DLJ. Also, telling the developers that the tenants need to be involved. The trust could assist with paid internships.

A. Van Eaton: I remember in 2019 maybe 2020, Vickie and I met with the Superintendent about a Year 13 Initiative. Did the high school ever pursue this?

L. Cook: They are looking for funding for this as the pandemic has only exacerbated the need to engage students who may have become disconnected and need extra support before entering college.

W. Blackmer: Final strategy is developing resiliency for the "future of work".

V. Choitz: Lisa's ideas about career readiness curriculum also fits into strategy 4.

L. Cook: SCALE is a Cisco licensed academy. It has to be thought through. The fact that there are no afternoon classes equaling a 6 hour block a day, it's worth building up a virtual training center. There are 40 certifications available on Cisco. Like a library where residents can work on self-guided licenses. City of Somerville Adult Ed library card.

R. Nadkarni: Could be made available to youth?

L. Cook: Yes, it's a virtual online learning platform. Those who cannot make it to SCALE can access it virtually. Those without a computer could come in and reserve a computer.

R. Nadkarni: Are there short-term one-off trainings? For example: How to present yourself in a digital environment and in digital interviews.

L. Cook: Absolutely. We have a distance learning training. Career readiness soft skills of digital literacy. Is there any opportunity to do some employer led training on what it means to be and employer that values DEI. Is there a way that we can support employers? Trying to be fair and navigating the need for remote versus in person.

T. Bent: There has been some discussion and maybe the trust could put forward a series of small business seminars.

A. Choitz: It would be in the context of providing good quality jobs for residents.

L. Cook: There is a productivity aspect to it. The work environment can be modified. The more nimble employer can be the more nimble.

V. Choitz: Employer resiliency. At our next meeting we will pull up our whole list and start to move towards the ranking voting.

W. Blackmer: We have a great list to work off of and discuss in the next meeting.

7. Nonprofit Workforce Shortages [Article](#) and Recommendations

W. Blackmer: I wanted to mention the Article that I shared via email last week from the National Council of Nonprofits on Nonprofit Workforce Shortages and the downstream disruptions that these shortages can have on service delivery to our most vulnerable communities.

We've witnessed this firsthand in Somerville as turnover and long-term vacancies at our providers can affect their ability not only to meet performance goals and meet resident demand, but also to respond to RFPs and exercise other funding opportunities.

Among the recommendations in this article are for governments at all levels to:

- “seek out solutions identified by marginalized and under-resourced communities that would overcome barriers blocking access to services and support for providing services”
- Promote affordable childcare
- Support passage of local student debt relief bill H.226
- Annually account for Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) in grants and contracts with nonprofit service providers

I encourage the Board to keep these recommendations as we begin to plan for the award and disbursement of FY23 contracts.

A. Van Eaton: I agree that the first and fourth recommendations are very important for the Trust to keep in mind.

T Bent: I've heard similar challenges from nonprofit partners surrounding staffing challenges

V Choitz: Thank you for flagging this great article.

8. Additional Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

9. Adjournment

Motion: T Bent makes motion to adjourn. L. Cook seconds the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 5-0 to adjourn.

Meeting Materials:

- Revised Job Creation & Retention Trust Meeting Notice & Agenda 7.19.2022
- draft Job Creation & Retention Trust Meeting Minutes 6.21.2022
- 2- JCRT Estimated Linkage Fees
- 3) JCRT Investment Priority Tracker
- Timeline for Annual Report and Public Meeting 2022-23

Minutes approved 8/16/2022