City of Somerville
Job Creation & Retention Trust
Monthly Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Location:	Online via GoToWebinar Platform
Date:	August 16, 2022
Time:	6:00 PM

Attendance
- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Silvana Dinka, Colleen Moran, Rachel Nadkarni, and Anika Van Eaton, and Rand Wilson
- Economic Development Staff: Jennifer Mancia, 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: Review and Approval of July 19 Meeting Minutes

    - Motion: R Wilson makes motion to approve July 19, 2022 meeting minutes. V Choitz seconds the motion.
    - Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 5-0 approving July 19 meeting minutes.

2. Review Received and Estimated Linkage Fees for 2022

    W Blackmer: Since our last meeting, we received the first linkage payment from the Building 2 at Boynton Yards. The Trust currently has approximately $643,000 in available funds. Up to $2M in additional funding is expected to be received by the end of the calendar year.

3. Review Current Status of Investment Priorities

    W Blackmer:
    a. Priority 1: Grant services agreements are being finalized with AACA and Per Scholas to provide 2022-23 industry specific training programs.
    b. Priority 2: After speaking with potential applicants for the Childcare Career Advancement Initiative, we are planning on reposting this RFP in the Fall, in September.
    c. Priority 4: Contextualized ESOL remains a priority of the JCRT. Given the availability of funds, we are recommending a vote on obligating funds to this priority later in tonight's agenda. We've met with previous grantees, SCALE and BHCC, and are making a recommendation based on past performance, capacity, and plans for 2022-23 programming.
    d. Priority 5: We are recommending two votes on priority 5 this evening: one in relation to the Workforce Development Practitioner Professional Development Grants, and the other for the Job Training Scholarship Fund for Somerville residents.

4. Process for Voting and Funding Investments

> V Choitz: Each vote we make has 3 levels of votes: 1) Ranked Priority Investments vote which is happening at our next meeting. It will provide some level of direction from our next year of funding. Super Majority (2/3) is required for this vote. 2) To Obligate Funding: Once a priority has enough information for us to write an RFP or contract, we will vote on obligating (requires simple majority of Board members present. 3) Distribution once proposals have been reviewed require 2/3 to pass as well.

5. Funding Obligation and Distribution Votes

> W Blackmer:
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> a. ***Vote***: To **obligate** $500,000 for contextualized ESOL programming for 150 Somerville residents. Staff are recommending a revision to the vote listed on the posted agenda—staff are recommending a vote to obligate $500,000 for contextualized ESOL programming for 150 Somerville residents. The estimated cost per participant is approximately $3,300.
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>> V Choitz: As a reminder, the City has this vote in mind so that the Board can continue to fund Bunker Hill's Contextualized ESOL for Somerville residents. The reason we are not doing a straight contract renewal is because the City needs to move from a contract to a grant services agreement which requires a new RFP process. Is this correct, William?
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>> W Blackmer: This transition from contract to grant services agreement also allows for a significant increase in the number of residents that can be served and allows for the provision of participant stipends.
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>> R Wilson: How much was awarded before?
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>> W Blackmer: We have awarded them $500,000 over the past two years.
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>> R Wilson: How well did they do with the first half million?
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>> W Blackmer: In their most recent year, their goal was to enroll 100 residents and they enrolled 136 residents. 73 students made measurable skills gains advancing 1 or more ESOL levels. 82% of students surveyed were extremely satisfied with the course, and 89% improved English for their life and job. Our assessment shows that BHCC consistently has the capacity to enroll even more participants than we have credited them for in the past.
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>> ▪ Motion: A Van Eaton makes motion to obligate $500,000 for contextualized ESOL programming for 150 Somerville residents.
>> ▪ Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 7-0.
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> b. ***Vote:*** To obligate and distribute $60,000 to establish Workforce Development Practitioner Professional Development Grants fund to be operated and disbursed by City of Somerville Workforce Development Staff.
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>> W Blackmer: These will be made available to practitioners including career coaches and adult educators. Organizations will be applying through City staff directly and we will report back on the spending.
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>> ▪ Motion: T Bent makes motion to obligate and distribute $60,000 to establish Workforce Development Practitioner Professional Development Grants fund to be operated and

disbursed by City of Somerville Workforce Development Staff. R Wilson seconds the motion.

- ▪ <u>Roll Call Vote</u>: Motion passes by vote of 7-0.

C. ***Vote:*** To obligate $56,080 to establish a Job Training Scholarship Fund for Somerville residents seeking job training.

W Blackmer: Residents can use these funds to support their participation in and completion of a job training program (does not need to be an opportunity currently funded by the JCRT). We will be seeking a 3rd party to manage this fund (i.e. a local CBO). This is because the City cannot make grants directly to individual residents, so we will be making the grant to the CBO who will then distribute to the individual. $6,080 would cover the administrative fees for the organization managing the fund. The maximum amount for each applicant is $5,000.

T Bent: Part of the RFP would need to ask about the providers plan for outreach to residents to make sure that residents know these funds are available.

J Mancia: We are hoping that this RFP could be released on September 12 along with other funds.

- • <u>Motion</u>: T Bent makes motion to obligate $56,080 to establish a Job Training Scholarship Fund for Somerville residents seeking job training. C Moran seconds the motion.
- ▪ <u>Roll Call Vote</u>: Motion passes by vote of 7-0.

6. Annual Report and Annual Public Meeting

W Blackmer: <u>Review Timeline</u> -- For the month of August, our goals are to present a draft of the annual report to the Board and discuss the format for the annual meeting. In relation to ranked priority investments, the Board is reviewing a combined list of old and new ideas. In September the annual report will be released, and we will continue prep for the annual meeting, including speaking roles. The Board will also tentatively rank the priority list which will be shared during the annual public meeting.

<u>Overview of Annual Report</u> -- Approach to this report: include more photos, individual success stories, and impactful statistics to make it more accessible and less dense. I'd like to hear general feedback from the Board.

A Van Eaton: The report looks engaging, and I am excited for the public to see it.

W. Blackmer: I will be sending a final draft in advance of the next monthly meeting for the Board to review in closer detail.

<u>Discuss format of Annual Meeting</u> --

T Bent: What is the format for the annual meeting? I am hearing more and more that residents are feeling that virtual meetings are not sufficient.

R Nadkarni: The City is exploring meeting platforms. One option is to move over to Zoom for our annual public meeting instead of GoToWebinar. It is a much friendlier platform for those joining virtually. We are getting some positive feedback on attendees from virtual meetings. The City is working towards the technology to run an effective hybrid meeting.

A Van Eaton: I agree that Zoom would be better than GoToWebinar. As far as the invitation, I'd suggest workshopping the text, for example, "connecting Somerville people to good job opportunities" or something similar. Having a survey is a good idea for those who are unable to share their ideas during the annual meeting, but we would need to get these responses by the time of our November meeting.

J Mancia: The survey will mimic the questions discussed in the breakout groups during the annual public meeting.

C Moran: Do you have updates on the survey that the high school interns have been asking businesses to complete.

> J Mancia: Yes, it has been quite an undertaking and City staff are picking up from where the interns left off as they were only to reach a portion of the intended participants.

V Choitz: I would like to see if we are able to possibly move the annual meeting to the week before or the week after? October 11th or October 25th?

> J Mancia: We can move it to October 25th.

> V Choitz: For the meeting format, we typically go over who is the Board, purpose of the Trust, go through our 4 strategies, our investments, introduce our priorities and provide some space for feedback—last year we did this via Jamboard.

> R Wilson: The Board should be listening more than sharing during the meeting.

> A Van Eaton: We should share our process for prioritization and share our initial ranking while still leaving a lot of space for discussion and public input. We should be clear an honest about where we are in the process. We should ask, "What did we talk about that you liked?", "What ideas are promising, but you may have concerns about?", and "What are ideas that you didn't see here that are priorities that you think should be included?" This will set us up well for our November meeting.

> R Nadkarni: One benefit of Zoom is the ability to do breakout groups and this could lead to better conversations and hearing from more voices.

> V Choitz: Yes, residents could discuss the questions that Anika mentioned in the breakout rooms. This seems more personal and engaging than the Jamboard. William, please come up with an agenda and run of show for the meeting.

> A Van Eaton: I agree that there should still be space for people to do the survey or share their comments in writing on a Jamboard in addition to the breakout rooms/sharing orally.

> V Choitz: William, also please update the PowerPoint and suggested speaking roles for the meeting. We will also need a draft survey to review as well.

> A Van Eaton: I suggest the survey to be released at the end of the meeting, link the survey to the slides, and have the survey to include the pretty similar questions to the breakout rooms.

7. V Choitz: The other agenda item is to Review Combined List of New and Previous Investment Ideas. This is a comprehensive list of new and old investment ideas. We would be doing a ranked voting on these items in the next meeting. Are there any items that individuals are confused about or need clarification?

V Choitz: Group D, Letter D on expanding menu of industry specific trainings does not seem like a distinct idea and is very similar to how we are currently investing – giving space for a proposer to make a case for the industry training that they are proposing. I don't think this needs to be listed separately on the list.

J Mancia: We are continuously meeting with employers coming into Somerville and discussing regional LMI trends with neighboring cities.

V Choitz: Group D, Letter E does not seem like a fundable idea either. Across the board, we want to be encouraging grantees to be talking with each other and have communication with employers about what skills they need to be training individuals for.

T Bent: With regards to Group D, Letter C, "Support students in knowing about and attaining legal requirements for work (Driver's Licenses, SSN, legal authorization to work)", shouldn't this be a requirement of all of our providers.

V Choitz: Our RFPs should include providers answering, "What are the legal requirements for working in this industry or job, and how are you helping your participants meet these legal requirements.

W Blackmer: Part of this idea was thinking about barriers that prevent individuals from accessing these trainings. A lot of these trainings already have applicant screening methods that align with employer screening methods (ex: AACA has a credit score requirement for bank training), but I think the idea here was to help people who are not quite ready to access these trainings. The most actionable barrier we can address may be related to Driver's License requirements.

V Choitz: This could maybe be part of a more robust pre-training program that gets people ready for training programs and simultaneously addresses other barriers. It makes sense to me for it to be connected to a training program.

A Van Eaton: It seems like training programs do not necessarily have an incentive to do the "pre-training piece" and alleviate these types of barriers. If we can set up a barrier alleviation program, we need to figure out how it could be funded.

V Choitz: It sounds like this is connected to a current investment we are making.

T Bent: Can we have staff talk to providers and see what providers are currently doing to address barriers for applicants and where this is currently showing up?

V Choitz: This could alternatively be included into a larger pre-training concept.

W Blackmer: Another idea is to ask providers to create a list of resources they can give to

someone who is not accepted to get the skills or certificates needed to begin the training program.

V Choitz: Regarding "CISCO training/certification at SCALE", I don't see this as a separate funding idea and instead it is a reminder that SCALE has this program both in-person and online.

W Blackmer: I personally don't know how their license for CISCO works, but the good news is that Jenn and I met with the interim director and can learn more about this license and have them consider including it in their proposal.

V Choitz: At our next meeting we will organize this list so that we can do a ranked vote that will then be shared with the public at the public meeting, get input and determine how we need to amend our direction, if needed.

8. Additional Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair
9. Adjournment

Motion: R Wilson makes motion to adjourn. T Bent seconds the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 7-0 to adjourn.

Meeting Materials:

- 8/16 Meeting Agenda
- 2-JCRT Estimated Linkage Fees
- 3) JCRT Investment Priority Tracker
- Timeline for Annual Report and Public Meeting 2022-23
- Combined Investment Ideas for JCRT
- draft Job Creation & Retention Trust Meeting Minutes 7.19.2022