



# City of Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust Annual Meeting

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

## Meeting Minutes

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**Location:** Online via Zoom Platform

**Date:** October 25, 2022

**Time:** 6:03 PM

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### Attendance

- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Silvana Dinka, Colleen Moran, Rachel Nadkarni, J.T. Scott, and Anika Van Eaton, and Rand Wilson
- Economic Development Staff: Jennifer Mancia, William Blackmer, Bn Demers

### Meeting Minutes

#### 1. Welcome

- V Choitz: Meeting called to order at 6:03pm. Quorum established with 8 trustees in attendance. Purpose of tonight's meeting: report to public on JCRT investments over the past year & to get feedback from public on the investment ideas the board has prioritized for the upcoming year. Tonight's Agenda:
  - Who is the Job Creation and Retention Trust Board?
  - What is jobs linkage funding?
  - Investment prioritization process
  - Overview of 2021-2022 investments
  - 2022-2023 Obligations and Ranked Investment Ideas
  - Breakout Room Activity and Report Back

#### 2. Annual Report Presentation

- V Choitz: I encourage you to visit: [Somerville-JCRT-Annual-Report-2021-2022.pdf](#) to view our annual report and learn more about the Trust.
- Board consists of 9 members, I will call on them to introduce themselves and their role:
  - Vickie Choitz, Resident and Co-Managing Trustee
  - Anika Van Eaton, Non-Profit and Co-Managing Trustee
  - Tom Bent, Business Re
  - Silvana Dinka, Resident
  - Colleen Moran, Business
  - Rachel Nadkarni, Mayor's Designee
  - Rand Wilson, Non-Profit
  - JT Scott, City Council President's Designee

We currently have one vacancy on the Board, Superintendent's Designee

I will now pass the mic over to William Blackmer, Staff Liaison to the JCRT to discuss jobs linkage funding.

- W. Blackmer: Jobs Linkage Funding/Fee:
  - Approved by City Council via a Zoning Amendment in December 2017 that is applied to commercial developments over 15,000 square feet to provide and enhance employment opportunities for Somerville residents. The fee was initially set @ \$2.46/sq ft. over 15,000 sq ft, The fee is adjusted annually in relation to CPI. The current rate is \$2.75/sq ft. Board is entrusted with managing these funds.
  - It can be spent on:
    - Skill development for Somerville residents,
    - job quality programs and training for employees and employers,
    - professional development for training providers,
    - equipment and software expenses,
    - research, planning, and evaluation,

Revenue sources through June 30, 2022 equal \$2.1M from 6 developers.

Investments: Through June 30th, the Trust has allocated ~\$2M. In the first half of 2022, the Trust invested over \$727,000 in contextualized ESOL, worker's rights trainings, and industry specific job trainings. I'd now like to introduce Anika Van Eaton, a Managing Trustee and nonprofit representative who will explain the investment prioritization process.

- A Van Eaton: Investment Prioritization Process:
  - Since the last annual meeting on November 9, 2021, the Board has made investments based on the public input shared at that meeting. We will give you more detail on these investments momentarily.
  - This Fall, considering research of local workforce development trends, labor market information, conversations with residents and employers, and review of the Talent Equity Playbook strategies and grantee performance, the JCRT Board tentatively ranked its 2022-2023 priorities.
  - At tonight's public meeting, we will present this list to you and invite you to give input on our tentative list.
  - At our November monthly meeting, the JCRT will reassess its priority list based on the public feedback that has been received and vote on a final priority list.
  - Then, dependent on the arrival of funds, the JCRT will issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs) in accordance with the ranked priorities.
  - The final step is for the Trust to select successful proposals to fund.

Brief overview of TEP and strategies.

- Strategy 1: Build a coordinated system of education and training services that ensures Somerville youth and adults achieve their career goals.
- Strategy 2: Position Somerville as a national leader in employee engagement practices.
- Strategy 3: Build a full suite of experiential learning opportunities for Somerville youth and adults.
- Strategy 4: Develop resiliency responses to the "future of work".

Overview of 2021-2022 Investments.

- Industry Specific Training (Strategies 1 & 3): Since the fall of 2020, the board has funded 3 organizations providing industry-specific training programs in alignment in with Talent

Equity Playbook Strategies 1 & 3. All three organizations are planning to continue their partnerships with the JCRT in 2023. The Asian American Civic Association (AACA) was recently awarded \$220,540 to continue to provide job training and placement services to 20 Somerville residents through their Careers in Banking and Finance, Alternative Fuels and Emissions, and Building Energy Efficient Maintenance Skills programs. Just-A-Start was re-awarded \$113,523 to provide job training and placement services to 5 Somerville residents, via their Biomedical Careers and IT Careers programs. Just A Start is currently in the process of placing its most recent graduates in this group and Per Scholas was recently awarded \$107,100 to provide job training and placement services to 15 Somerville residents in technology training programs including Software Engineer, Cyber Security, IT Support, and Amazon Web Services re/Start. Also displayed on this, and the following slides, are highlights of the impressive outcomes of these investments.

- Adult Education and English as a Second or other Language investments: In 2022, in alignment with Talent Equity Playbook Strategy 1, SCALE, the Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences, concluded its contract providing remote career readiness (Cisco IT and Healthcare IT) and digital literacy classes to 49 Somerville residents. This Summer, Bunker Hill Community College completed its second year of the Somerville ESOL program, serving 136 Somerville residents in multiple levels of ESOL courses alongside contextualized coursework to teach essential customer service skills.
- Worker's Rights and Employee Engagement: This past year, in alignment with Strategy 2, the Trust awarded \$119,000 to the Welcome Project, Brazilian Worker Center, and Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Health and Safety to deliver worker's rights workshops, wage theft education, and a Leadership Institute. This investment resulted in 127 Somerville residents participating in Know Your Rights trainings and the resolution of 29 workplace issues cases. While the Trust did not spend additional funds on quality job HR training for small businesses and entrepreneurs this year, they maintained their commitment to this priority. Small businesses surveys are currently being conducted to gauge small business interest in this initiative.
- Rapid Response and Resilience: As part of Strategy 4, this past Fall, the City of Somerville collaborated with MassHire Department of Career Services, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council to develop a rapid response plan to combat current and future worker displacement. No monetary investment from the JCRT was needed in developing this plan. This Spring, the Trust also awarded \$22,000 in student emergency funds to address emergency needs faced by JCRT training participants.
- Funding Obligated but not yet awarded: In addition to the investments above, the JCRT has voted to obligate funds to the following ideas, though no awards have yet been made to any organization or individual. Job Training Scholarship Fund- \$56,080. Childcare Career Advancement Initiative- \$300,000. Professional Development Fund for Workforce Development Practitioners - \$60,000. Funding to provide ESOL and HiSet to a total of 190 residents.

2022-2023 Tentative Investment Rankings:

A Van Eaton: I will now present the tentatively ranked investment priority list voted on by the JCRT Board members during their September 2022 meeting that we will be requesting resident feedback on shortly. Tentative Rankings:

- 1. Coordination and Data Collection Staff Position – FY24: The JCRT has distributed funding to cover 50% of the Coordination and Data Collection Staff Position through June 2023. This idea is to proactively obligate funding to cover 50% of the position for fiscal year 2024 (July 2023-June 2024).
- 2. Somerville High School Post-Secondary Supports Programming: This idea includes the creation of a “13th year” program that provides mentorship and guidance to a group of 20 recent Somerville Public Schools graduates who live in families with low-incomes and who may need additional support as they pursue a) a degree at a community college or state college, b) an industry recognized or academic certification, or c) a “quality job” as defined by Somerville’s Office of Workforce and Talent Development. Additionally, a comprehensive post-secondary success program would be provided for 50 graduates who live in families with low incomes, are pursuing post-secondary education, training, and/or employment, and may need less intensive supports after year 13.
- 3. Somerville Good Municipal Jobs Training Program: Fund a program(s) that integrate adult education/English Language Learning with job training in a specific industry or occupation and connect Somerville residents to Somerville municipal jobs. Priority industries and occupations include entry-level office and Department of Public Works entry-level positions; however, proposers can make a case for other in-demand occupations and industries in Somerville.
- 4. Mental Health, Resilience, and Trauma Training for Adult Education and Workforce Development Organizations: Fund staff training and organizational coaching for adult education and workforce development programs in Somerville on trauma, trauma-informed approaches, resilience and mental health for staff, students, and participants.
- 5. Digital Literacy and Training Resource: Fund digital literacy and training resources for Somerville residents. The lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have exposed and accelerated the need for digital literacy. Such training will enable practitioners to more effectively teach and train residents in hybrid and virtual learning environments. It will also equip residents with the skills they need to access academic, job training, and employment opportunities. Funding will prioritize continued and expanded investments in current NorthStar digital literacy programs and licenses.
- 6. Industry Specific Job Training Programs: Fund providers or partnerships to deliver training and related services for Somerville residents with lower education levels to help them develop skills and earn credentials needed to obtain gainful employment and careers in growing or high-demand industries in Somerville and the greater Boston region. Program(s) should target residents who are training-ready; additional JCRT funds will be available for residents who need to improve basic academic and English skills prior to entering training.

*NOTE:* The JCRT has distributed funding to Just-A-Start IT and Biomedical Careers training programs through March 2023, Per Scholas IT trainings through September 2023, and Asian American Civic Association’s Careers in Banking and Finance, Building Maintenance, and Green Automotives and Maintenance Skills training through June 2023.

- 7. Curriculum Development and Updated Training Materials: Fund community-based organizations and non-profit educational providers to conduct curriculum development and redevelopment and to

purchase updated training materials to continue preparing Somerville residents for the careers of tomorrow.

- 8. Career Exploration and Readiness Pre-Training Program: Fund a provider or partnership of providers to deliver a career exploration and readiness pre-training program(s) geared for individuals with low educational and/or English language attainment. The program(s) may deliver service such as career exploration and coaching, development of professional workplace skills, digital literacy, employer presentations and tours, assistance with obtaining employment-required documentation (i.e. Driver's License) etc.
- TIE-9. Tied One Year post-placement services for Students in recent and current JCRT-funded training and education programs: Provide additional funding to current or recent JCRT-funded programs that have assisted participants in securing employment to continue providing career assistance and support services to participants for up to one year. For example, career coaches would continue to schedule regular check-ins with clients and provide ongoing support and access to necessary resources for success in employment.
- TIE-9. Wage Theft and Worker's Rights Training: Continue funding programs to educate Somerville workers on their employment and wage theft rights. NOTE: The JCRT has funded the Welcome Project and its partners since 2021 to implement a worker's rights and wage theft curriculum through August 2022.
- TIE-11. Contextualized Education for Adults and English Language Learners: Fund providers or a partnership to provide contextualized adult education and/or English language education that is taught within the context of specific growing or in-demand industries in Somerville or greater Boston. The contextualized adult education/English Language Learning should prepare individuals with lower education and/or English levels for employment in a specific industry(s) and/or for further education and training in that industry(s).

*NOTE:* The JCRT has voted to obligate \$750,000 to fund contextualized English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) and Adult Basic education programming for 190 Somerville residents through June 2023.

- TIE-11. Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) Expungement and Job Placement Services: Fund services to assist individuals with misdemeanor offenses in qualifying for and accessing employment opportunities through barrier removal including expungement, or "permanent destruction" of criminal records, and job placement services.
- 13. Paid Internship Program: Fund a program(s) that provides paid internship opportunities for Somerville residents living in low-income households who are enrolled in high school, college, and/or students in workforce development and job training programs.
- 14. Municipal Apprenticeship Feasibility Study: Fund a study on the feasibility of creating a municipal apprenticeship in Somerville. This study would research existing models of municipal apprenticeships across the country, consider which specific occupations such an apprenticeship could target, and provide guidance on how Somerville could implement a municipal apprenticeship program.

Now, we are eager to hear your feedback because conversations like the ones we have tonight have, and will continue, to have an impact on the investments of the JCRT makes. This slide lists just a few investment ideas that were generated out of comments during meetings like this.

Examples: Job training scholarship fund, Somerville Good Municipal Jobs training program, Increased funding for participant stipends.

### 3. Public Input on Tentative Investment Rankings in Breakout Rooms

A Van Eaton:

o Momentarily you will be invited to join a breakout room, where we encourage all to weigh in on these two discussion questions:

- o 1) To what extent do you agree with the JCRT's priority list? (i.e. "not at all", "somewhat agree", "agree", "strongly agree?" We encourage you to elaborate on your answer
- o 2) Are there any investment ideas that you do not see on this list that you would like for the JCRT to consider?
- o How to participate:
  - 1) Please accept our invitation to join a breakout room for a facilitated discussion
  - 2) Share your thoughts orally, via chat, or by posting on our Jamboard
  - 3) At the end of the breakout rooms, you will be invited to return to the main room. Please DO NOT leave the meeting! We will then get a report back from each room

### 4. Report Out on Breakout Room Discussions

V. Choitz: Breakout room 1:

- a. Asked to rank higher: Worker rights training and SCALE,
- b. Focusing to jobs responding to climate change, for example heat pump technicians
- c. Ensuring that funded programs highlight the stipend when recruiting

A. Van Eaton: Breakout room 2:

- a. Presentation of priorities could be more clear
- b. Incorporate Green new deal, workers' rights, and racial justice into investment ideas
- c. Build better connections between organizations,
- d. Provide data to better understand what trainings have achieved
- e. Local hiring
- f. advocating and representing wage staff
- g. assistance securing new space, materials

R. Wilson & C. Moran Breakout room 3:

- a. List was challenging to prioritize because there are many helpful ideas
- b. Questions around what curriculum development might look like,
- c. data collection would be helpful,

- d. CORI expungement
- e. looking to focus on union organizing and paid internship programming for youth
- f. mental health resilience and trauma training,
- g. Collaboration around recruitment
- h. importance of working with high school students
- i. and request that JCRT or city convene grantees to meet.

T. Bent Breakout Room 4:

- Focus on apprenticeship programs, partnering with union for protection for wages, exposure to different trades, focusing on young adults who have left high school,
- Worker's center investment, maintaining sustainable jobs, theme that stood out a lot of conversation around collaborations with unions, municipal departments, workers center, veteran's groups and green new deal. Reintegration and longer-term pathways.

L. Rich – Group number 1 pointed out that union square contractors are not living up to their 20% hiring commitment.

E. Childs – Group 4 talked about collaboration, a lot of groups will be collaborating, all the issues will come together when the different groups work together.

A. Portney – Group 2 it was difficult to look at the list as apples to apples because they all fall into different buckets. Broke it up into training assistance and programs. The workers and the workforce need to be trained on how to work together. If you only go one direction it doesn't work. You have to educate the employers in this City on the workforce that you are providing. Employer training would go a long way.

E. Cruz – It is important to keep the important role of advocating for workers and training workers. There should be continuance on this work. Education is an essential aspect and worker's rights needed to be protected.

V. Choitz - congratulate Samuel, Somerville resident, for graduating from one of the funded training programs.

W. Blackmer - The survey is available in six different languages. The link to the survey will be shared as well as the workforce development email address: [wfd@somervillema.gov](mailto:wfd@somervillema.gov). Here is the survey link: [Somerville Job Creation and Retention Trust Annual Survey \(jotform.com\)](https://jotform.com/Somerville-Job-Creation-and-Retention-Trust-Annual-Survey)

Motion: T. Bent makes motion to adjourn. R. Wilson seconds the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 7-0 to adjourn.

Meeting Materials:

- JCRT Annual Public Meeting 2022 PPT
- [JCRT 2022 Annual Meeting Public Discussion](#) Jamboard

*Meeting Minutes approved 11/21/2022*