



City of Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust Monthly 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

Location: Online via GoToWebinar Platform

Date: November 21, 2022

Time: 6:00 PM

Attendance

- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Colleen Moran, Rachel Nadkarni, and Anika Van Eaton, and Rand Wilson
- Economic Development Staff: William Blackmer

Meeting Minutes

- V Choitz: Meeting called to order at 6:06pm. Quorum established with 6 trustees in attendance.
- W Blackmer: House rules about technology delivered.

1. Review and Approval of September 20th and October 25th meeting minutes

- Motion: R Wilson makes motion to approve September 20th and October 25th meeting minutes. T. Bent seconds the motion.
- Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 6-0.

2. Review Received and Estimated Linkage Fees for 2022

- W. Blackmer: No new funds have been received since our last update. The Trust currently has just over \$700,000 in uncommitted funds. This 'uncommitted funds' total will NOT be negatively impacted by tonight's distribution votes since these funds were all set aside prior to the release of the latest RFP.

3. Review Current Status of 2021-2022 Investment Priorities

- W Blackmer: *As the Board moves closer to finalizing its 2022-2023 ranked investment priorities now presents a great opportunity to review the status of 2021-2022 investment priorities. I will be reviewing priorities by Talent Equity Playbook strategy.*
 - *Priority 1: Industry-Specific Trainings- fully funded as Just A Start, AACA, and Per Scholas have all been awarded funding to continue services into 2023.*
 - *Priority 2: Childcare Career Advancement Initiative- we did not receive proposals for these funds; the Board should reconsider how these funds are spent*
 - *Priority 4: Contextualized education for adult and ELLs- BHCC was funded for their Y2 and tonight the Board will vote on distribution of \$750,000 in latest RFP*
 - *Priority 5: PD Fund for Adult Education and Workforce Development Professionals- The funds for practitioners are now available! Board will vote tonight on distribution of funds for administering the Job Training Scholarship Fund*

- *Priorities 6, 10, 11, and the ongoing priority of supporting the WFD staff person role are all included on the 2022-2023 priority list.*
- *Priority 7: Job Quality HR training- We need to reconvene the subcommittee.*
- *Priority 3: Wage Theft and Worker's Rights- completed in 2022 and included in the 2022-2023 priority list*
- *Priority 9: Was not funded by the Trust.*
- *Priority 8: Rapid Response Strategy – complete*

This list demonstrates that the Trust has a strong record of committing funds to top investment priorities. Opportunities not funded on this list appear in the 2022-2023 priority list.

- V Choitz: Congratulations Board. This is a great list of accomplishments.

4. Distribution Votes

- W Blackmer: There are 3 distribution votes on tonight's agenda. In advance of tonight's votes a memo was sent to the Board regarding responses received to the WFD 23.1 (the latest RFP) and resulting funding distribution recommendations. As a reminder, \$56,080 was available for administration of the Job Training Scholarship Fund, \$750,000 was available for Contextualized English Language and High School Equivalency Test Preparation (HiSet) Education for Adults and English Language Learners, and \$300,000 was available for the Childcare Career Advancement Initiative. Does the Board have any points to discuss or questions regarding the memo prior to these votes being taken?
 - T Bent: My question is about the recommendation not to award funds for the AACA Epic training program. The reason seems related to the amount of money per resident required. I know we have had some other high-cost training programs we have approved. How much would participants be making during the 90-day probationary period and also how much if they are hired permanently by Tufts? This is an important point of consideration. The other awards we are considering are not directly connected to job training.
 - W Blackmer: Those are great questions, and I did not see this information in the proposal. 3 of 4 proposals received were for contextualized ESOL and Adult Education, including this one. We were not requesting proposals for industry specific training at this time. This program is much shorter than Just-A-Start's industry training programs.
 - C Moran: This proposal does not identify what specific roles the employees are being trained for.
 - T Bent: Can you please inquire for more information to explain the costs behind this program as well?
 - R Nadkarni: Is this a certification that is transferrable between hospitals?
 - W Blackmer: I will follow up to get more information on this proposal
 - V Choitz: To clarify, the RFP had a cap of \$750,000 so we are not able to fund BHCC, SCALE, and AACA, so for this reason, William was weighing which were the strongest funding applications. William will follow up and we can consider AACA for future funding. Any other questions?
- C Moran: I'm surprised there wasn't any applicant for the childcare program.
 - W Blackmer: There are a lot of great resources available right now from the Commonwealth for employers looking to upskill their workers in this field which impacted things. Additionally, there is a bit of a marketing challenge right now finding workers interested in entering the childcare

field. There may be other ways the JCRT can still make positive impacts on the talent pipelines for this industry.

- R Wilson: I was hoping CAAS would apply. What happens with this money?
 - W Blackmer: The subcommittee should reconvene to discuss the future of these funds. With current availability of funding at the state level, we may have the same issues in the foreseeable future unless there's a change to the scope.
 - V Choitz: Staff should do some research to see if there is a need outside of the scope that this RFP identified to help the industry in another way.
 - T Bent: Would the CTE program at the high school be eligible for these funds? Is this RFP going out to all the different parties in the City (CTE, YMCA, CAAS)? I could talk to the Director at CTE about the availability of these funds.
 - W Blackmer: We have a lengthy list of organizations we share these funding opportunities with. I am happy to take ongoing recommendations to add to this list.

T Bent and R Wilson will reach out to CTE and CAAS on this topic.

- V Choitz: If there are no other questions, I am entertaining a motion on the votes listed in the agenda, one at a time.
- A. **Vote:** To distribute \$56,080 to the Somerville Community Corporation (SCC) to administer the Job Training Scholarship Fund.
Motion: Made by A Van Eaton and seconded by C Moran.
Vote: Vote passes by vote of 6-0.
- B. **Vote:** To distribute \$500,000 to Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) for the Somerville English Language Learning Program.
Motion: Made by R Wilson. R Nadkarni seconds the motion.
Vote: Vote passes by vote of 6-0.
- C. **Vote:** To distribute \$232,300 to the Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences for the Literacy Academy for Contextualized ESOL and ABE HiSET Preparation Education for Adult Learners.
Motion: Made by V Choitz. T Bent and C Moran both second the motion.
Vote: Vote passes by vote of 6-0.
- W Blackmer: Thank you, I will promptly notify all 4 applicants of the Board's decisions.

5. Revisit 2022-2023 Ranked Investment Priorities

- W Blackmer: I have shared with the Board the Compiled Resident Feedback spreadsheet which includes comment and Jamboard posts from the Annual Meeting, the results of our public survey, and the tentative priority list that the Trust voted on in September.

Overall, feedback was generally positive; in both the annual meeting and survey there was broad

agreement with the range of investment ideas. There was strong support for continued funding of Wage Theft and Worker's Rights programming, English language learning, and industry-specific job training programs. Some feedback expressed confusion about the role of the staff coordinator position and felt that other priorities should be ranked higher. Other feedback recommended ways to improve and expand community outreach regarding available programs, involving unions, providing more programs for youth, expanding the range of training programs funded, and continuing to provide support services to training and education participants.

Tonight the Board will be reranking the priority list given the feedback that has been received. Before the reranking, I invite Board members to ask questions/discuss these priorities. Once we wrap up that discussion, I invite all to open the spreadsheet I have emailed to the Board.

- V Choitz: In the October 25th meeting minutes we can find the full list of priorities as a point of reference.
- R Wilson: There was a lot of support for helping further a Green New Deal in Somerville. I am not sure how this folds into the work of the JCRT but it is something we should think about.
 - V Choitz: I think that this connects to our industry specific job training program. Perhaps we award extra points to a provider training for this career field. We could also invest in clean energy-related curriculum development. In both the pre-training funding idea and in the contextualized ESOL realm we could also emphasize the importance of this industry.
 - R Wilson: It would be great if the JCRT can digest this feedback and get back to the public to explain how this feedback informed the selection of future investments. This could be mentioned at next year's annual meeting and in next year's annual report.
 - T Bent: What I am concerned about is that our investments don't always have a direct connection to a career opportunity. We are spending quite a bit on contextualized ESOL. We need to get businesses at the table to see what kind of training they need to hire local talent. As a board member I'd like to see more of these conversations with employers.
 - V Choitz: We have made some investments in industry specific training programs but it has been a little time. It sounds like you are also advocating to raise industry specific training programs as a higher priority on our priority list.
 - T Bent: Yes.
 - R Nadkarni: We might need to think about smaller and more focused industry specific job trainings for very niche fields (ex: training for videography and video editing).
 - T Bent: How was the mix of the attendees at the meeting?
 - W Blackmer: There was participation from organizations we funded in the past, may be interested in upcoming funding, contributing developers. Some more residents participated via the survey. There was a mix of participants. I can share back the attendee list if people are interested.
 - R Nadkarni: I agree with making more business connections with Chamber of Commerce Members.

W Blackmer: Please see if you are able to open up the link I have shared with the Board members and find the tab with your name and then fill in column D with your updated rankings.

Your September rankings are listed in Column C for reference. Please consider tonight's discussion, the survey results, and the public meeting comments in your reranking.

We will give everyone some time now to rerank these items. I can also follow up by email for anyone who is unable to access this tonight and will leave the voting open until 3pm on 11/23/2022.

6. Board Leadership Update

- V Choitz: The update is that I would like to step down from my role as the Managing Trustee of the Board. I will still be on the Board, but I feel like you have had me at the head of the Board for quite some time now and we have laid a solid foundation, but I feel it is healthy for a Board to have new visionary leadership. My husband has also retired, and we will be traveling more so I will not have as much time to put into all the preparation that happens ahead of each meeting. I plan to nominate Anika as the new Managing Trustee at the next meeting, but we are also looking for a co-managing trustee. Board members please consider whether you are interested in stepping into either of these roles.
 - R Wilson: Vickie, you've done an outstanding job.
 - A Van Eaton: We so appreciate your leadership on the Chair and are glad you will be staying on the Board.

7. Planning for future meetings

- V Choitz: I was going to suggest that we skip the December 2022 meeting and reconvene in January. Does anyone see a reason that we need to meet in December.

All agree that the Board should reconvene in January 2023.

8. Additional Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

- None.

9. Adjournment

Motion: A Van Eaton makes motion to adjourn. T Bent seconds the motion.

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

Meeting Materials:

- Job Creation and Retention Trust Meeting Notice & Agenda 11.21.2022
- draft Job Creation and Retention Trust Meeting Minutes 9.20.2022
- draft Job Creation and Retention Trust Meeting Minutes 10.25.2022
- JCRT Estimated Linkage Fees
- JCRT Investment Priority Tracker
- Memo to JCRT re WFD 23.1 Funding Distribution Recommendations
- Compiled Resident Feedback - Mtg & Survey