



Anika Van Eaton, Managing
Trustee
Vickie Choitz, Managing Trustee

City of Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust Monthly Meeting

Trustees
Thomas Bent
Silvana Dinka
Jim Hachey
Jacob Luria
Wilfred Mbah
Rachel Nadkarni
Rand Wilson

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual: Online via Zoom Meeting
Date: June 10, 2025
Time: 6:30 PM

Attendance

- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Silvana Dinka, Jim Hachey, Anika Van Eaton, and Rand Wilson
- Economic Development Staff: William Blackmer

Meeting Minutes

A Van Eaton: Meeting called to order at 6:33pm. Quorum established with 6 trustees in attendance.

W Blackmer: House rules about technology delivered.

1. Review and Approval of past meeting minutes

- a. Vote to approve May 15th meeting minutes

Motion: V Choitz makes motion to approve May 15th 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 2025

W Blackmer: The current linkage fee balance remains at around \$2.2M. There's an additional approximately \$900,000 we are anticipating from 2 projects that are wrapping up. Currently, we aren't projected to receive any funds in 2026 or 2027. I am still waiting to hear back from our Finance team regarding whether the JCRT Fund generates interest and/or if there is the potential for the Trust to increase its fund via investment.

3. Review and Discussion of Active Programs and Obligations

- a. Update on Childcare Career Advancement Request for Proposals (RFP)

A Van Eaton: Memo was shared giving an overview of this RFP, the proposal we received, and the subcommittee's evaluation of the proposal. We have space in tonight's meeting to further discuss the proposal before any motions are made on distributing funds.

R Wilson: I was hesitant to decide on this proposal because I had anticipated more responses. With just one proposal, I had nothing to compare it to, so I am undecided.

V Choitz: I was impressed by the number of organizations that came together in partnership on this proposal. This proposal captured many organizations who might have responded independently, so that may be why we only received one proposal.

T Bent: Does the proposal explain which partners are providing each part of the program?

A Van Eaton: Yes, the roles are explained in the proposal.

- *Vote to distribute \$294,200 to City of Somerville's SomerPromise Department for the Childcare Career Advancement Initiative.*
 - *Motion: V Choitz makes motion to vote to distribute \$294,200 to City of Somerville's SomerPromise Department for the Childcare Career Advancement Initiative. J Hachey seconds the vote.*
 - Roll Call Vote:* *Motion passes by vote of 6-0.*

b. Update on Good Municipal Jobs Request for Proposals (RFP)

A Van Eaton: RFP was released on May 21st and is open until August 15th. We had a handful of organizations attend the info session we held last week on 6/2. W Blackmer working on memo to highlight this for the Mayor's office. We are trying to get the word out about this RFP and as V Choitz mentioned in the chat, we are hopeful for some strong cross sector collaboration proposals.

V Choitz: I was disappointed that there was not much union representation at the info session. Rand, do you have ideas on how we can get them more excited about this RFP and partnering with others?

R Wilson: I can reach out to Ed Halloran, head of the Somerville Municipal Employee Union and share who attended the info session. I will also see if we can join their next meeting or set up a separate time to talk about the RFP and to answer any questions they have about it.

Just A Start didn't come to our info session, but I was impressed when we did a tour of their facility last year.

T Bent: Which organizations attended the info session?

W Blackmer: Asian American Civic Association, MassHire Metro North Career Center, The Welcome Project, and Somerville Community Agencies Network (SCAN). It was a relatively small group, but I have been including many organizations on follow up communications.

T Bent: Another challenge may be finding an appropriate facility for the training to take place. Some of the groups that attended do not really have the space to facilitate such training, unless they could perhaps bring on a partner to help with this piece.

A Van Eaton: W Blackmer, thank you for following up with Just A Start, and Rand, thank you for following up with SMEU.

V Choitz: We should also continue to send out 2-3 more announcements about this RFP. Organizations are looking for funds and so we want to remind them that this is available.

A Van Eaton: Yes, I also encourage all Board members to continue sharing out the opportunity with their networks.

T Bent: This is kind of a sidebar, but I'm working with Bunker Hill Community College as they received a planning grant to develop an HVAC training. They are partnering with DLJ, the developer at Boynton Yards and are meeting soon to finalize the location and lease agreements. I want the potential of this training opportunity to be on the radar of the JCRT. The idea is to set up the training in a facility owned by DLJ in the Taza Chocolate building (561 Windsor).

A Van Eaton: Thanks for the update, Tom. Keep us posted as this develops.

c. Update Regarding Financial Literacy Subcommittee

A Van Eaton: W Blackmer sent out a Doodle poll to try to identify a time for the subcommittee to meet in July.

4. Discussion on Issuing our next Request for Proposals

A Van Eaton: After our last meeting, W Blackmer out the responses from our survey to partners that the JCRT has funded. Some of the trends from that survey were that many orgs have already been impacted by federal funding cuts or are anticipating funding cuts. Partners are also seeking flexible funding as they navigate an uncertain funding landscape. We also talked about reviewing the declaration of trust to review the types of things that the Trust can fund. The goal was to reground us in the language of the governing documents and determine how this informs the structure of a future RFP responsive to the needs of the field. One idea is to review the list of use of distributions and highlight which do and do not seem like priorities to be covered in the next RFP.

We should also think about the timeline for releasing this RFP. We have the Good Municipal Jobs RFP currently out with responses due August 15th. We also have 4 JCRT programs that we have been funding that are scheduled to end this year.

V Choitz: Can you reshare the section about the use of distributions? I also think it is probably best to only have one RFP out at a time, so I would wait until after August 15th before opening this RFP.

Upon reviewing the section, I think we can use or modify this list if we want to do an RFP that is more open in scope. I would probably not include “E. funds for research projects to determine other appropriate uses of the Trust Fund”, as this seems like it should be in the wheelhouse of the Trust. I also would not include “K. any other programs or projects which fulfill the purpose of the Trust”, as this opens it up too wide. Otherwise, I feel like this list aligns well with what we saw from the survey and heard from last year’s annual public meeting.

I also might say that “B. funds to assist in outreach efforts to identify vulnerable populations facing barriers to employment” would have to be combined with something else. I don’t think I want to fund just outreach efforts alone.

S Dinka: Can anyone explain “J. funds for capacity building?”

A Van Eaton: I understand it as supporting an organization’s ability to do more. We would want to clarify that this could be capacity building that ties back to the overall mission of the Trust of supporting job creation and retention for Somerville residents.

T Bent: For deciding how to spend funds, the Board must consider whether the program or project will help to ensure long-term employment and career building opportunities. I am a little confused as to what this RFP might look like. What are we trying to achieve?

A Van Eaton: I think V Choitz articulated this well at our last meeting. When the funding landscape was more advantageous and the Trust was also more flush with cash, the Trust was really looking to pilot innovative initiatives and we were strongly dictating what specific types of we were trying to see. Now, we are in a situation where the organizations that support workforce development are fighting to survive, so it is a challenging environment for us to be specifically dictating to an organization how we want them to use these funds if that are at risk losing large portions of their funding. We want to provide funding to continue to advance the mission of the Board in a way that is filling the current needs of organizations doing the work.

J Hachey: So, it sounds like we are proposing a more open-ended grant, correct? If so, I think it is a great idea and provides opportunities for organizations that are losing funding.

S Dinka: I want to share a concern that Rand mentioned. We only had one response to our most recent RFP and that makes me think we need to organize or set up the RFP differently to be more inviting for applicants. Maybe we need to think about the length of time they are given to apply also.

- *A Van Eaton: Who would be interested in joining a subcommittee to think about this RFP in more detail? I see interest from S Dinka, V Choitz, T Bent, and A Van Eaton.*

W Blackmer: There may also be roles for different members at different points in the process—some may focusing on the drafting of the RFP and other Board members focus on proposal review.

V Choitz: Since this would be a more wide-ranging RFP and we would probably want to do this only once a year, we would want to determine how much funding we make available overall and how much individual proposals can apply for.

R Wilson: Could part of the RFP involve a presentation about a training vision around pathways from school to work? I like the work that the Painter's Union is doing with Boston Public Schools.

T Bent: The CTE programs at Somerville High have similar relationships with the unions.

A Van Eaton: Our Good Municipal Jobs RFP is also encouraging union partnership and may serve as a bridge from high school students into careers.

J Hachey: We also have the pre-apprenticeship training launching this summer that is working with 18-21 year olds interested in the trades.

S Dinka: J Hachey, what are the age requirements for the CTE programs?

J Hachey: Students can start CTE in 10th grade, but we like when students can start in 9th grade so that they have exposure to all 14 shops to get a better understanding of our offerings.

S Dinka: Does the number of students participating drop significantly from 10th-12th grade?

J Hachey: No, we have strong participation in the number that complete CTE.

S Dinka: Do they earn industry certifications or just course credit?

J Hachey: Our CTE programs are Chapter 74 approved and so students graduate with high school diplomas and industry certifications.

5. Reminder of Upcoming Meeting Schedule

A Van Eaton: All Board members should have invites for the recurring monthly Board meetings on recurring Thursdays.

6. Adjournment

Motion: *T Bent makes motion to adjourn. S Dinka seconds the motion.*

Roll Call Vote: *Motion passes by vote of 6-0.*

Meeting Materials:

- 6/10 Mtg Notice and Agenda
- draft 5/15/25 Mtg Minutes
- JCRT Received and Estimated Linkage Fees
- JCRT Investment Priority Tracker
- June 2025 Memo Re: Childcare Career Advancement Initiative RFP Responses

Approved 7/17/2025