



Anika Van Eaton, Managing
Trustee
Vickie Choitz, Co-Manager

City of Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust Annual Public Meeting

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

Meeting Minutes

Location: Hybrid: Online via Zoom Meeting AND In-Person at Tufts Administration Building
(167 Holland St, Somerville, MA 02144)

Date: November 20, 2025

Time: 6:30 PM

1. Welcome

A Van Eaton: Welcome the 2025 Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust Annual Public Meeting held on November 20, 2025. My name is Anika Van Eaton and I am one of the Managing Trustees of the Job Creation & Retention Trust, and I call this meeting to order at 6:33PM.

Tonight's meeting is being conducted both in-person and on Zoom, will be recorded, and will be a public record. Zoom attendees, we ask that you please mute your microphone when not speaking.

Board members to confirm they are in attendance, in alphabetical order:

- Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Silvana Dinka, Jim Hachey, Jacob Luria, Wilfred Mbah, Rachel Nadkarni, Anika Van Eaton, Rand Wilson.
- All confirmed attendance. We have a quorum.

2. Annual Public Meeting Presentation

A Van Eaton: Overview of tonight's agenda:

- Who is the Job Creation and Retention Trust Board?
- What is jobs linkage funding?
- Implementing Investment Priorities
- Overview of past years' investments
- Current Investments and Upcoming Programs
- Current Fiscal Picture
- Clarifying Questions
- Community Discussion on Future JCRT Funding and Investments

The Board consists of nine trustees, three ex-officio and six appointed.

The three ex-officio trustees are the Mayor (or their designee), the Superintendent of Somerville Public Schools (or their designee), and the President of the City Council (or their designee).

The other six include two Somerville residents, two representatives of nonprofit organizations, and two Somerville business representatives

I will now call on each board member one-by-one to introduce themselves and what seat they represent.

- *Anika Van Eaton, Non-Profit and Co-Managing Trustee*
- *Tom Bent, Business Representative*
- *Vickie Choitz, Resident and Co-Managing Trustee*
- *Silvana Dinka, Resident*
- *Jacob Luria, Business Representative*
- *Jim Hachey, Superintendent's Designee*
- *Wilfred Mbah, City Council President's Designee*
- *Rachel Nadkarni, Mayor's Designee*
- *Rand Wilson, Non-Profit*

W Blackmer: *My name is William Blackmer and I am the Workforce Development Coordinator for the City of Somerville and serve as the Staff Liaison to the JCRT.*

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 and is adjusted annually based on the CPI. The current rate is \$3.10/sq ft. 50% of the fee is paid when a project receives building permit and 50% at Certificate of Occupancy.*

The JCRT Board is entrusted with managing these funds. The JCRT Declaration of Trust outlines how JCRT Funds can be used:

- *Development and creation of Job training and skill development opportunities for Somerville residents*
- *Outreach to identify populations facing barriers to employment*
- *Tools and software to identify and assess residents' skills/match residents with available local jobs*
- *Equipment and other capital costs related to non-profit/public job training and education*
- *Seed money for new programs or organizations*
- *High school and career technical education programs*
- *Help employers improve high road business practices with innovative models such as worker-owned coops*
- *Professional development and training for non-profit and education providers*
- *Capacity building*
- *Research to determine other appropriate uses of the Trust*
- *Other programs/projects that assist in creation and maintenance of employment opportunities for Somerville residents in and near Somerville*

Implementing Investment Priorities –

Since the last annual meeting the Board:

- *Surveyed field on needs in current context*
- *Incorporated annual meeting and survey feedback into Requests for Proposals (RFPs)*
- *RFPs released*
- *Selected and awarded proposals*
- *Tonight, we have our 2025 Annual Public Meeting*
- *Plan for fiscal picture and future investments*

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”

T Bent:

Next, I will give an overview of past years’ investments.

From 2020 to present, the JCRT has provided services to over 790 in adult education, 225 in workers’ rights, 125 in industry-specific job training, and 22 social service providers for a total of over 1,190 individuals served. The JCRT has also distributed more than \$425,000 in student and resident support services via COVID-19 Emergency grants to nonprofits and innovative student support stipends. These stipends provide funds for basic needs to participants to support their ability to persist through skill building opportunities.

The first main category, adult education, provides residents with the fundamental skills needed to advance their careers and addresses three of the talent equity playbook strategies. Adult education includes:

- Contextualized English classes for Speakers of other languages, meaning English classes that include vocabulary for specific careers.
- Adult basic education or high school equivalency courses preparing residents to earn a high school diploma or GED
- Digital literacy training resources
- Stipends for participants

Tonight, we are joined by Joselyn Marte who is going to share more on one of those programs.

J Marte:

I am Joselyn Marte, the Director of the Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experience, SCALE, and we have been partnering with the JCRT for the past few years. Some programs we offered last year included the paraeducator training program to training paraeducators for the school district, contextualized English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) for early childhood education, and contextualized ESOL for certified nursing assistants. Next, we will hear from one of our program graduates.

A Cardoza:

My name is Andrea Cardoza. I completed the paraeducator training program at SCALE and right now I am working at the Argenziano School in the afterschool program. This training program is the best thing that ever happened to me. It helped me improve my English and learn about working with kids, a job that I love. I’m really thankful to Joselyn and SCALE for this opportunity.

M McDonald:

My name is Mariana McDonald and I am from Somerville Public Schools Human Resources Department. It has been wonderful collaborating with Joselyn at SCALE and Jim, the Career and Technical Education Director at Somerville High School. We have hired several graduates from SCALE’s paraeducator training program, including

Andrea. Joselyn has worked closely with our hiring administrators to understand what we are looking for in candidates and helps guide her graduates through our application process. Those trained by SCALE's program come to us very prepared and have been great hires. They have opportunities to advance from part-time to full-time lead teacher positions and to grow further within the field.

J Hachey:

First, I want to thank Joselyn and the team at SCALE for working so hard with the students in these programs. On the Board, I represent the superintendent, Dr. Carmona, who's with me here tonight and since we have all been working in Somerville, we've all been pushing for there to be more night programs available at Somerville High. They and this Board have done an amazing job getting these programs running.

The second major category of investments has been in industry-specific job training programs. These investments support Somerville's strategies of providing a coordinated system of job training opportunities that incorporate hands-on, practical application learning. They equip residents with the skills needed to succeed in high demand occupations and industries in our area.

So far, the Trust has invested in training programs for residents in:

- *Banking and Finance*
- *Biotechnology*
- *Building Maintenance, Construction, and Clean Energy,*
- *Education and Healthcare*
- *Careers in the Cannabis Industry*
- *And Information Technology.*

Participants in these trainings have been supported with student stipends and support services to help cover basic needs, like childcare, reduce education costs, and address the potential income loss associated with pursuing a job training opportunity. Our outcomes show that graduates are experiencing a wage gain of over \$10/hour which is impressive.

The third category, Wage Theft and Workers' Rights, has helped participants understand their rights and protections as workers, combat wage theft, educate their peers on these topics, and receive support in navigating workplace issues. This programming supports Strategy 2 of the Talent Equity Playbook: to position Somerville as a national leader in employee engagement practices.

Additional Past Investments:

In addition to the three major investment categories, the Trust has also invested in a Trauma & Resilient Somerville Training for nonprofit professionals and in the Post-Secondary Success Program for recent Somerville High School Graduates.

Current Investments:

- *The continuation of several industry-specific job training programs*
- *A fund to support the professional development of workforce development practitioners serving Somerville residents*
- *The Childcare Career Advancement Initiative, a nearly \$300,000 investment to support the prospective and incumbent childcare and early childhood education workforce.*

- *The Trust also continues to invest in the Workforce Development Coordinator and Data Collection Staff position to coordinate the work of the JCRT. We have currently committed funds to this position through FY 2028.*

Upcoming Programs:

The Trust is also looking forward to the launch of several upcoming programs

- *STEM Internships for recent Somerville High School Graduates*
- *Facility Maintenance and Office Administration Training Programs*
- *Digital literacy and workforce readiness for Somerville Housing Authority residents*
- *Contextualized ESOL and Certified Nursing Assistant Program*
- *Nibble Culinary Entrepreneurship Program*
- *CAAS Workforce Development Program Launch*
- *Industry-Specific Job Training in IT, Banking, and Weatherization*

A Van Eaton:

Current Fiscal Picture- To date, the JCRT Fund has generated \$8.4M. An additional \$500,000 is projected to be received during the current fiscal year. Since fund generation is tied to new commercial development in Somerville, you can see that the Trust received most of its funds in Fiscal Year 2023 and 2025. The Trust received smaller contributions in the other years.

The next chart shows the funds that have been invested (approximately \$6M) the funds that are currently “on hand” (\$2.38M), and the funds projected to arrive in FY26 (\$523,000).

After the arrival of \$523,000 in the next few months the JCRT does not expect to receive additional linkage payments for several years.

3. Clarifying Questions Regarding Presentation

A Van Eaton: *Momentarily, we will move into the Community Discussion portion of the agenda. If you have a clarifying question on the fiscal picture or any of the other slides we have covered tonight, please raise your hand. If you are attending on Zoom, you may use the “raise hand” button in the reaction section, or you can type your questions into the chat.*

G Puigbo:

When you mention the JCRT will not receive linkage payments for several years, is this because the recent developments are not occupied and so the JCRT is not receiving the second half of the linkage payments?

R Nadkarni: *The first 50% of the jobs linkage payment is received when a new commercial project gets its building permit. The other 50% comes when the project gets its certificate of occupancy. All current lab buildings have been completed and paid both payment except for one project, 74 Middlesex, which is finishing up its work. Once 74 Middlesex makes its payment, the picture is unknown because large-scale commercial development (above 15,000 sf) is not likely until we see more recent builds become tenanted.*

4. Community Discussion on Future JCRT Funding and Investments

A Van Eaton: *We will now shift into tonight’s discussion. Given the fiscal picture we have just discussed, here are some questions that we would like your input on:*

- *At what rate should the Trust be spending versus conserving funds?*
- *Should the Trust be awarding fewer large or smaller grants?*
- *What are the community’s workforce development programmatic needs?*

G Puigbo: I appreciate SCC being a first-time recipient of JCRT funds. Considering the Trust only has \$3M to spend in the next 5 years or so and that the Board may need to conserve funds, I think that the Board should consider investing more in local Somerville organizations that are supporting workforce development. It looks like the Trust is investing a lot in organizations that are outside of Somerville.

R Wilson: This is something on the Board's mind. My priority as a Board member is to make sure that we are selecting local organizations or partnerships that include local organizations.

P Cain: Has the Board investigated which programs have been the most successful? Since funds are more limited, the Board may need to be more intentional about evaluating which programs are having the greatest impact. Are most of the people that have graduated from these programs working in Somerville?

A Van Eaton: All grants made by the Board do include requirements to report on the outcomes of participants. Common metrics we require and review are enrollments, completions, securing a job, wage gains, etc. Also, when programs apply for funding, we ask them to outline their performance and experience delivering these services in the past.

W Blackmer: Regarding where graduates are employed, we do not restrict organizations to placing individuals at only Somerville employers. Somerville is part of a very integrated economy and it's common for individuals living in Somerville to find employment in neighboring cities. That being said, we do encourage partnerships with Somerville employers, including larger "anchor" employers.

V Choitz: I want to clarify that "out-of-town" organizations that the Trust is funding are only serving Somerville residents with JCRT grant dollars.

P Hasseli: MassHire is a regional organization with a regional perspective. When we apply for funding that focuses on local communities, we do consider that we are applying for funds in competition with local organizations. This brings up a good point and maybe it should be a requirement that if a non-Somerville organization is applying, they need to include a Somerville organization on their proposal.

H Ziobro: I wonder about more collaboration between nonprofits so that they are coming together to work on joint proposals and making sure that we are not serving the same individuals or families so that our dollars are reaching as many Somerville residents as possible.

A Van Eaton: Yes, we've been excited about some of the grants made in relation to the Good Municipal Jobs Training RFP and always encourage collaboration and partnership.

R Wilson: Going forward we should consider awarding points based on collaboration and partnership on all our requests for proposals (RFPs).

R Nadkarni: In relation to Pat's point around employers. We have been trying to find ways to encourage local employers to partner with organizations when they apply for funding. The paraprofessional program that we heard from earlier really embodies what we've been trying to accomplish bringing together job seekers, organizations, and employers within one program. We've been trying to figure out how this model can be applied to larger local employers that have lots of room for career growth. Our Economic Development team is hoping to have some added capacity within the next year to work more directly with larger employers.

T Bent: There are some industry-specific trainings where we have not seen a proposal from a Somerville organization in that specialty, but almost all the non-Somerville organizations we fund are well-connected to nonprofit partners in Somerville. Regarding employers, some very large employers already have their own dedicated training funds, but some middle and smaller-size employers could really benefit from this.

G Puigbo: At SCC, we don't have the technical capacity to provide intermediate training around many of the industries that you mentioned earlier in the presentation, but what we do well is core skills training. Core skills training is not as valued in my opinion not just by this committee, but by the community at large. We've run successful entry-level computer training for the past two years. We hear from our partners that are running industry-specific training that they need people coming into their programs, but that applicants are lacking the computer training and English competency, and we are prepared to assist with this at SCC. We are not receiving the funding to meet the demand for our workforce development services. This is the first year SCC is receiving funds from the JCRT. Our workforce development program has grown rapidly in recent years and we have the "boots on the ground" in the community and are doing the work to engage with local residents.

P Cain: Can there be inter-city coordination around the financing of workforce development programs?

R Nadkarni: I can try and answer; jobs linkage funding is relatively uncommon. Boston has a similar linkage fee, but Cambridge and other surrounding communities do not. I do work closely with our counterparts in Cambridge and Boston as part of our life sciences corridor and we are focused on working together to keep the industry growing. But, I do think that this is an interesting layer to consider whether there are funds that can be applied for on a regional level to ensure that the local ecosystem continues to grow.

S Islam: I'm Sal Islam with the Somerville Foundation. Many employers have a high demand for seasonal workers, but it can be challenging to train temporary employees and to put them on payroll. The Somerville Foundation provides a service of adding employees to our payroll while providing mentorship, support, and helping individuals apply for jobs. I think that investments should really go toward wraparound services embedded into workforce development. While students are earning their HiSETs we can help them gain experience by embedding them into opportunities with employers that do have seasonal hiring spikes. It is ultimately the goal to make sure that this wealth coming into Somerville benefits the residents living here.

L Devane: Are there ways to associate the linkage fee with something else in order to generate more funds?

W Mbah: I have been working to determine if there may be other sources of City funding that can support these types of programs.

A Van Eaton: The generation of other funds is well outside of the Board's purview. Something we are interested in is if the community is aware of other funds that can be matched with Board funds or if you know any state grants that can be woven in to leverage the limited linkage funds that the Trust does have.

K Oulhadj: We are running a co-op program at Franklin Cummings Tech and we are trying to match our Somerville participants with Somerville work experiences. We are open to any recommendations you have for employers that we should be connecting with.

A Van Eaton: I encourage you to connect with the City of Somerville to have a deeper conversation about this.

T Bent: The Trust does rely on the grantees to incorporate employers into their trainings and foster connections to support employment opportunities for their participants.

G Puigbo: SCC created a role that is specific to employer partnership development, and we do focus on working with and highlighting Somerville job opportunities.

T Bent: The Somerville Chamber of Commerce, East Somerville Main Streets, and Union Square Main Streets are also good resources for organizations that are trying to connect with Somerville employers.

S Dinka: The Board is working hard to fund as many opportunities as we can for residents. My family has benefitted firsthand from the hard work of local organizations. There are many factors when we are choosing which programs to fund. We are paying attention to how many residents are being served and at what cost. We are making sure that the programs serve the diversity of Somerville residents and address a range of barriers that residents are facing. We are grateful for all the services that Somerville organizations are providing.

T Bent: V Choitz mentioned in the chat too that the City of Somerville has many open positions and one of our recent RFPs is focused on helping address this talent need.

R Carmona: The School District appreciates its collaboration with the Board. It has helped us move our work forward. The funding from the Board is very generous and has been seamlessly integrated into the work that we are trying to achieve. Thank you for your contributions.

R Nadkarni: One change we made in our most recent RFP round was that the JCRT has typically looked to fund innovative programs. In our most recent funding round, the Board was working on providing multi-year funding and putting more emphasis on programs with a proven track record of success to sustain the institutions and programming that we have going forward. I'm curious to hear partners' reactions toward sustaining programs as opposed to funding new initiatives. Do you desire funding to sustain the work that you are doing, or desire funding tied to innovation and new ideas or programs?

G Puigbo: Flexibility in funding is appreciated. We have lost funding at the federal level, so we are looking for multi-year funding and funding that can both cover the work that we have been doing and improve the services we are delivering. Funding for wraparound services is crucial.

L Devane: Yes, many funding applications are looking for innovative programs, but it is important to continue to have funding for opportunities that have been running successfully for years and are foundational to our work.

D Gibbs: I want to thank the Board for the recent award made to Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS). We are an established organization that is beginning to get more involved in the workforce development field. I want to react to the question of innovation versus sustainability. Part of what our program will be doing over the next couple years will be finding additional funding so that we can grow our work. There are resources at the state level and other private funding resources. A frustration I have with the emphasis on "innovation" is that we don't need to "reinvent the wheel" every time that something comes up. We can do this work, do it well, and learn from each other. Sustaining organizations that are doing good work here in Somerville with a proven track record, I think, is far more important than looking for a new program.

R Wilson: What is unique about our funding is that it is not tied to any state or federal program and it is here to fill gaps that aren't met by other sources. Also, our RFPs come from conversations in these meetings; it comes from listening to you all. If you have ideas on how we can sustain your work let us know. Our RFP drafting is an iterative process.

G Puigbo: Investing in programs that graduate residents with the skills needed to enter job training programs would be a phenomenal investment.

T Bent: This is not the only opportunity to engage with the JCRT. We do have monthly meetings that are open to the public and to public comment.

S Islam: I appreciate tonight's discussion. It is not easy to choose between innovation or sustainability. Ideally you want to do both. I think the Trust should look closely at its

data, look at what the goals were when the Trust was established and whether it is meeting those goals. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) showed that small investments can have lasting impacts as they help form partnerships and that small grants can make a difference. I don't think you need to choose between innovation and sustainability. Evaluate what programs have had the greatest impact and continue to fund them but then leave some smaller funding available to help fill gaps and promote collaboration between organizations.

5. Adjournment

A Van Eaton: Thank you for attending tonight's meeting, for the work you do in the community, and for the ideas that you shared. If you have additional public comments, please email wfd@somervillema.gov by 12:30PM on Friday December 5th. We especially encourage you to share this with interested residents who were unable to attend tonight's meeting. We will also be in-touch soon to share our annual report.

Meeting Materials:

- Job Creation & Retention Trust Meeting Notice & Agenda 11.20.2025 (revised)
- JCRT Annual Public Meeting 2025 PPT

Approved 12/18/2025