



City of Somerville

Job Creation & Retention Trust

Monthly Meeting

Anika Van Eaton, Managing
Trustee
Vickie Choitz, Managing Trustee

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

Date: September 18, 2025

Time: 6:30 PM

Attendance

- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Silvana Dinka, Jim Hachey, Jacob Luria, Wilfred Mbah, Rachel Nadkarni, and Rand Wilson
- Economic Development Staff: William Blackmer

Meeting Minutes

V Choitz: Meeting called to order at 6:35pm. Quorum established with 6 trustees in attendance. J Hachey and W Mbah joined after attendance was taken.

W Blackmer delivered house rules about technology.

1. Review and Approval of past meeting minutes

- a. Vote to approve August 21st meeting minutes
Motion: V Choitz makes motion to approve August 21st meeting minutes. S Dinka seconds the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 5-0. R Wilson abstained.

2. Review Received and Estimated Linkage Fees for 2025

W Blackmer: The Job Creation and Retention Trust (i.e. "JCRT", "Trust" or "Board") received \$408,000 from the development at 495 Columbia. The fund also earned approximately \$20,000 in interest. The current balance of uncommitted funds sits at approximately \$2.3M. The JCRT is still anticipating the arrival of approximately \$500,000 from one project wrapping up at 74 Middlesex. The Trust is not anticipating the arrival of any additional funds in 2026 or 2027.

R Wilson: Do we have any anticipated funds in the pipeline?

R Nadkarni: I think we should be anticipating beyond two years of no additional funds coming in once we receive the payment from 74 Middlesex.

3. Review and Discussion of Active Programs and Obligations

- a. Status Update on Current and Recently Concluded Programs

W Blackmer: Regarding current programs, SCALE's contextualized programs for 2024 and 2025 are scheduled to wrap up at the end of this month. One recently concluded program is the Somerville English

Language Learning (SELL) Project led by Bunker Hill Community College. A memo was shared with Board members giving an overview of the project including its successes and challenges. The Post-Secondary Success Program is also scheduled to conclude this Fall.

T Bent: I was a bit disappointed in the outcomes of the Bunker Hill SELL Project.

W Blackmer: To review, BHCC achieved 139/200, or about 70% of their enrollment goal and 102/150, or 68% of their completion goal. About 75% of students received stipends. The combination of low enrollment, completion, and stipend distribution numbers resulted in about \$95,000 in the grant that BHCC could not capture. A question going into next month is whether the Trust wants to return this balance to the pot of uncommitted funds. BHCC had mentioned the delay in grant approval and its impact on enrollment. In the future, I recommend that they do not enroll students before the grant award is announced so they can avoid a similar issue in the future.

V Choitz: In normal times, this would not be a good report for an established program. I would've expected at least 80% of the enrollment and placement goals – but these are not normal times. I was struck about the point that they had lower-level English speakers enrolling and participants were very hesitant to share personal demographic information given the current immigration climate. I wonder if they apply for the current RFP with this same program if they may face similar issues, or if they have figured out ways to address the challenges they faced. The next general round of funding is not being released in enough time to fund this or other programs in the fall semester.

R Nadkarni: They needed \$150,000 to run the program for a semester and they have \$95,000 left unspent. I wonder if a no-cost extension for a third semester could help them reach their goals for this grant.

W Blackmer: I was considering what alternatives there might be to returning the funds back to the uncommitted funds pot. I think the grantee could have requested a no-cost extension before the grant term expired. It will be a bit of a challenge for this program in the future since the limit for the current RFP is \$100,000 per program per year.

V Choitz: I'm kind of surprised that BHCC didn't ask for a no-cost extension, but since they didn't, I think we should return the unspent funds to the uncommitted funding pot. Was there "no-cost extension" language in the grant agreement?

W Blackmer: I will confirm whether this language was in their grant agreement.

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

W Blackmer: Last month we received 5 proposals. The subcommittee of Tom, Silvana, Rand, and Vickie individually scored proposals and there were some follow up questions for the proposers. I asked the proposers to respond to those follow up questions by this Friday. Once we have these responses, I will reconvene the subcommittee with the intent to finalize subcommittee recommendations to bring to the full Board at the October meeting.

c. Update on Fall 2025 JCRT Request for Proposals (RFP)

W Blackmer: The Fall 2025 RFP was released on September 3rd, an info session was held on September 11th and questions from proposers were received and responded to earlier this week. Proposals will be due Friday, October 3rd. From October 3rd-9th the subcommittee will independently review and score proposals. On the 9th, the subcommittee will then meet at 6:30PM to discuss the proposal scores. The subcommittee will make recommendations to the Board and we anticipate those votes also taking place on October 16th. Right now, we have Silvana, Tom, and Anika, on that subcommittee. We are looking for one more Board member to review and score those proposals and meet to discuss the proposals on October 9th. Do we have any Board members interested in volunteering for this?

R Nadkarni: I'm happy to help with this subcommittee.

4. Discuss Annual Meeting Plan

W Blackmer: Our annual meeting is scheduled for November 20th. Last month, we talked about using the annual meeting to showcase the impact of the JCRT, preview upcoming investments, and inform the community about the fiscal picture the Trust is facing. We also talked about asking the public to help us think about creative partnerships to support the impact and longevity of the Trust. This could involve more involvement from employers and inviting them to our annual meeting could be a good starting place. Do others have thoughts on "creative partnerships", who we are trying to engage on a deeper level, and how to engage them? Is this Board member-led, City-led, a combination?

T Bent: We should bring in the business community more because they can inform us more about where training gaps exist. We can utilize the Chamber of Commerce and the City of Somerville to recruit more businesses to attend.

V Choitz: Maybe we can have one or two employers that have hired participants from our programs to tell their stories during the meeting.

J Hachey: We could also have an organization and possibly a participant that received the funds report out on their successes with the grant.

R Wilson: It would be powerful to hear from someone who went through training and got a job. We have also allow time for public comment after we have done our presentation. Do we have an announcement ready?

W Blackmer: No announcement yet, but I will work on getting a "save the date" ready for November 20th.

V Choitz: I suggest we pose a very specific question to the audience about whether they have any ideas on who else or what other entities could support the continuation of the work funded by the JCRT.

W Blackmer: For the flow of the meeting, it sounds like we start with a presentation, pause for questions, and then ask the community what ideas they have around sustaining this work.

R Nadkarni: I do think employer involvement will be an important part of what comes next. We should determine if there is a pathway towards a matching program and look at what other state resources organizations and employers can utilize to deepen the impact of this work. One example is the Pathmaker program. For example, an employer may put together a successful application for a state grant to train their workers and then in coordination with the JCRT we may be able to boost Somerville residents participating or benefitting from this grant.

T Bent: Yes, we should do more research into the state programs that are available.

V Choitz: Maybe we can put on our agenda for January or February to discuss these state programs and understand how they best intersect with the JCRT.

W Blackmer: I want to remind the Board that both of the recent RFPs for Good Municipal Jobs and the Fall 20025 RFP, we are asking proposers to tell us about their budget, funding strategy, matching dollars, and sustainability of their programs. I encourage Board members to pay attention to this as they make recommendations on which programs to fund.

V Choitz: William, can you prepare a more detailed outline of what the annual meeting will look like at next month's meeting, and we can also assign speaking roles? Can you also prepare a "save the date" to go out in the next two weeks?

W Blackmer: Yes.

J Hachey: T Bent and I have a conflict with the October 16th meeting date. Can we look at alternative dates?

W Blackmer: Yes.

5. Adjournment

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

Roll Call Vote: *Motion passes by vote of 8-0.*

Meeting Materials:

- 9/18/25 Mtg Notice and Agenda
- draft 8/21/25 Mtg Minutes
- JCRT Received and Estimated Linkage Fees
- JCRT Investment Priority Tracker
- September Memo re: Bunker Hill Community College Program Conclusion

Approved 10/27/2025