



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: Remote via Zoom Meeting
Date: December 18, 2025
Time: 6:30 PM

Attendance

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

Meeting Minutes

A Van Eaton: Meeting called to order at 6:37pm. Quorum established with 6 trustees in attendance.

W Blackmer delivered house rules about technology.

1. Review and Approval of past meeting minutes

- a. Vote to approve October 27th meeting minutes
- b. Vote to approve November 20th meeting minutes

Motion: T Bent makes motion to approve October 27th and November 20th meeting minutes. R Wilson seconds the motion.

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

2. Review Received and Estimated Linkage Fees for 2025

W Blackmer: Since the Job Creation and Retention Trust (i.e. "JCRT", "Trust" or "Board") met in October, the current uncommitted balance has risen approximately \$90,000 to \$2.54M. Approximately \$40,000 of this is interest received in the last 2 months and approximately \$50,000 is because the Trust made awards for \$950,000 instead of \$1,000,000 for the most recent request for proposals (RFP). There's an additional approximately \$500,000 we are anticipating from 1 project that is wrapping up. Currently, the Trust isn't projected to receive any other funds in the next few years.

3. Review Active and Upcoming Programs

A Van Eaton: Our spreadsheet of active and upcoming programs has been updated to include a section in green that lists the 10 programs that the JCRT voted to fund in the October meeting including 2 funded by the Good Municipal Jobs Request for Proposals and 8 funded by the Fall 2025 Request for Proposals. William is working with grantees on finalizing scopes and grant agreements for all of these programs and all are set to launch in early 2026.

W Blackmer: I want to note that not all programs have the same start and end dates, so some of the programs will actually extend into 2028, mainly for placing participants. It is exciting to see the launch of many programs and to have consistent programming in place for Somerville residents for the next couple of years.

4. Annual Meeting Reflections and Discussion

A Van Eaton: Last month we held our annual meeting on November 20th. We had a great showing with approximately 50 participants attending in-person or remotely. Board members were sent in their meeting materials a list of themes from both the community discussion and from written comments received via email. We invite Board members to share reflections on the meeting and discussion.

R Wilson: We received some critical feedback about making sure that we are supporting our Somerville-based community partners over organizations from other cities and I am sympathetic to that. Perhaps when we score proposals there should be more value placed on proposals from Somerville-based organizations.

R Nadkarni: One takeaway for City staff to consider is our role in connecting workforce training programs and participants with employer partners. It does seem like more employer engagement is a need for our partners and as our City staff capacity grows in the coming year, this could be a good way that we can continue to support the work of the JCRT. Vickie expressed support for these points.

R Wilson: Rachel, can you say more about what this employer engagement may entail? Might this include site visits to employers to learn more about how the City, the Trust, and our partners can help meet the talent and training needs of our partners? In these conversations I would want to know whether these employers are making efforts to hire Somerville residents.

R Nadkarni: Yes, I think that is sort of where we are aiming. Our Workforce Team has had a bit of a staffing gap due to the City's hiring freeze, but we will be able to advertise soon for our Senior Workforce Development Planner. We see a focus of this role to be sitting down with our top employers to discuss hiring needs. Lately, we have been doing some of this work with TransMedics, a prospective tenant interested in relocating to Somerville and expanding their workforce.

T Bent: Related to employer engagement, it is also important to make sure that the developers who are funding the Trust are reaching out to their tenants to explain the benefit that the Trust provides related to workforce training and make sure the training that we are funding is aligning with the employer needs. Knowing that Trust funds are limited moving forward some of these employers may see the benefit of investing in training partners to offset the cost of that training. Related to Rand's comment earlier, it's important to recognize that Somerville organizations may not be able to provide all specific trainings that employers are seeking and so I don't think that we should restrict request for proposals to be limited to Somerville-based organizations only.

R Nadkarni: Another theme that was discussed is that if we are not putting out RFPs in the short-term, we may want to take some time looking retrospectively at where our Trust dollars have been spent and on what interventions or at what points in the career development process. For example, looking at spending on job skills and readiness versus digital skills, 10th grade English proficiency. I'm also tempted to look at other City-funded programs, including American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) programs. I have seen funding cut back in digital skills and I do see the role of the JCRT to cover the full breadth of upskilling, from individuals with very limited skills, to individuals that have been laid off and may need to be retrained for a different career.

A Van Eaton: I agree that given the almost \$1.4M that has recently gone out to fund programs and the amount of staff time that goes into administering these programs, I would expect that we are not likely to be putting out another RFP for awhile and this will allow for some points of reflection. We should also continue to monitor the economy and the funding landscape.

V Choitz: In addition to looking at the national nonprofit landscape, I'd recommend conversations with local workforce development partners. It may be good to hold a focus group or two or conduct another survey. It would also be good for the Board to have strategic conversations internally. The first several years of the Board were trying to drive innovative, "best practice" programming and we had the luxury of money and time. With our most recent RFP we pivoted to a strategic approach of a very open RFP to meet the needs of our community partners. We have some space since we won't be releasing an RFP soon to think about our next strategic approach to funding workforce development work in Somerville.

T Bent: Does the City host a "jobs board" where employers can list positions they need to fill? Additionally, we may want to go on the road a bit and visit organizations like Union Square Main Streets, the Chamber of Commerce, or employers we are trying to connect with and do more outreach.

W Blackmer: Something I heard in the annual meeting and in conversations since has been the desire for our grantees to interface more with one another. They are interested in troubleshooting challenges together and making sure that the services that they offer are part of complementary pathways and not duplicating efforts. Also, related to Tom's comment on the "jobs board", this may be a potential growth area for our Economic Development team. We have a small business division that is focused on addressing the needs and challenges of small businesses and one hope is that our team can provide more on a workforce development front for business amplifying what positions they are looking to fill and supporting matchmaking between employers and training providers.

R Nadkarni: Yes, we could also loop in our small business team and maybe have them meet with the Trust to hear what they are observing as local workforce needs. With ARPA funding, one of the projects we ran was a small business technical assistance program and we realized that many small businesses do have training and credentialing needs for their employees that overlap with the goals of the JCRT. One challenge though is that JCRT funds are only for Somerville residents and so it is an important question to determine whether the Board would be willing to consider amending the ordinance to allow for employees of Somerville businesses who are not Somerville residents to benefit from JCRT funds.

J Hachey: Related to an earlier point about investing in local Somerville organizations and some concerns over funding going to non-Somerville organizations, a solution is to include a clause in the RFP that proposers need to collaborate with a Somerville nonprofit on a proposal for the JCRT.

R Nadkarni: Going back to the job board idea, I could see this happening in collaboration with a nonprofit partner. The JCRT might be able to provide some funding to sustain and help curate a job board that matches the skillset of individuals completing JCRT-funded programs.

Prior to seeking a motion for adjournment, the Board tentatively agreed to schedule its next meeting for January 29th, 2026.

5. Adjournment

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

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

Meeting Materials:

- draft 10/27/25 Mtg Minutes
- draft 11/20/25 Mtg Minutes

- JCRT Received and Estimated Linkage Fees(12.15.25)
- JCRT Investment Priority Tracker(12.15.25)
- Annual Meeting Discussion and Written Comment Themes

Approved 1/29/2026