



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: April 16, 2026
Time: 6:30 PM

Attendance

- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Silvana Dinka, Wilfred Mbah, and Anika Van Eaton
- Economic Development Staff: William Blackmer

Meeting Minutes

A Van Eaton: Meeting called to order at 6:42pm. Quorum established with 5 trustees in attendance.

W Blackmer delivered house rules about technology.

1. Labor Market Information Presentation by MassHire Metro North Workforce Board

Kelly Washburn and Penny Hasseli from MassHire Metro North Workforce Board (MNWB) presented local and regional labor market information. Topics covered included unemployment and labor force participation rates, job posting data for Somerville, the Metro North region, and Greater Boston, and impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) on the labor market.

T Bent: I was surprised to not see much mention of construction jobs in the presentation. Do you know why this was absent from the data?

P Hasseli: Lightcast technology is pulling data from online job postings, and we recognize that most construction jobs are not actually being advertised in that online method. These job opportunities may be shared through more traditional methods such as by "word of mouth" or flyers. Historically construction jobs have not shown up much in our reports from Lightcast.

T Bent: Yes, that makes sense. I feel like higher level construction jobs are more likely to be posted online. I wonder if this captures data about contractors hiring from union halls. With the information on AI, it seems like some people working in tech may be training themselves out of job opportunities by education AI models. Overall, there was a lot of great information in the presentation.

W Mbah: How are you adapting workforce development strategies to meet the specific needs of cities like Somerville given rapid changes in housing costs, demographics, and industry changes?

P Hasseli: Job seekers regardless of age are looking for that perfect match for their career path to help them meet their financial goals and needs. There is no longer that one "perfect job." Many people have full-time jobs and multiple "gig" jobs. Regardless of what job you have today, you are going to have to adapt and learn new skills as the workplace continues to evolve. We are often having conversations with our partners about how job

seekers need to be able to adapt to disruptions coming to the labor market.

W Mbah: What are the biggest gaps you are seeing between employers' needs and the current workforce and how can we, in local government, better partner with you to close those gaps?

P Hasseli: A gap we are seeing in our region is with driver's licenses. Every time we speak to a high school in our region, we're hearing that most students, don't have a driver's license, don't have a learner's permit, couldn't afford driver's education, or don't have access to parent with a car to practice with. We are also seeing a decrease in college enrollments among residents in our region. A valid driver's license is very valuable to an employer. Another gap is employer "buy-in." Some employers are taking youth or adult interns if the costs are subsidized, but we are trying to start more conversations with employers of taking on interns unsubsidized.

W Mbah: How should the region rethink workforce development to ensure equitable access to emerging opportunities, particularly for immigrant communities or historically underserved residents?

P Hasseli: Funding driver's education at Somerville High would be huge. MNWB is currently trying to find grant funding to make this possible. People are also hungry to understand the labor market and career pathways, but they are not sure where to look for reliable information. If the City can have a central place to showcase career pathways, training opportunities, or more labor market information, especially if this information is available in other languages, I think this could be a reasonable first step.

S Dinka: Thank you for your presentation. I'm a mom of three and I know it can be hard to navigate reliable information online. How easy is it for people to connect with you and find you? How does someone determine if a job posting is legitimate or if the job has already been taken? Which sectors are eligible for subsidized training programs and how do you track the success of participants?

P Hasseli: We have three career centers in our region which are a good "front door" to residents looking to meet with a career counselor. We also share out a job seeker report and information on our social media accounts, but we are always looking for new ways to help residents find out about our services.

K Washburn: Regarding job postings, sometimes listings are posted just due to company policy, or they may be posted to gauge interest or demand even if the job is not yet available. Unfortunately, there is no certain way to figure out from the posting if the company is actively seeking applicants, but I think Lightcast does its best to reduce this kind of data.

P Hasseli: To track participant success, our career counselors work with job seekers to help them learn about industries and training opportunities and work with them until that job seeker gets a job. Career counselors track if they obtain a job, how much they are being paid, and if their job offers benefits. We do much more thorough work with young people to support them in retaining their new jobs. The career centers work with over 13,000 individuals each year, so it is hard to track overall retention numbers.

A Van Eaton: Thank you Kelly and Penny for joining us. We appreciate all the data you've presented and the data in the appendix that you provided. Board members, if you have other questions as you review that data, please send along your questions to William who will pass them along to MassHire.

2. Review and Approval of past meeting minutes

- a. Vote to approve March 19th meeting minutes

Motion: V Choitz makes motion to approve March 19th meeting minutes. S Dinka seconds the motion.

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

3. Review Received and Estimated Linkage Fees for 2026

W Blackmer: The current uncommitted balance sits at around \$2.7M. There's approximately \$500,000 we are anticipating from 1 project that is wrapping up. Currently, the Trust isn't projected to receive any other funds linkage payments in the next few years.

4. Updates on Active Programs and Upcoming Programs

W Blackmer: This chart displays active and upcoming programs funded by the JCRT. There are currently 14 active programs. The most recent being Per Scholas's IT trainings, as our grant commenced on April 1st. I'm continuing to work with, Somerville Community Corporation on launching their Microsoft training program. Start date is yet to be determined.

5. Volunteers for 2027 RFP Subcommittee

A Van Eaton: As we begin preparing for our next request for proposals, tonight we are taking the names of volunteers who are interested in participating on this subcommittee. The subcommittee members will be involved in drafting the 2027 RFP, reviewing proposals, and making recommendations to the full Board regarding proposals to fund. Any questions? Any volunteers?

S Dinka, T Bent, and A Van Eaton expressed interest in participating. W Blackmer expressed R Nadkarni's interest in participating. If additional Board members express interest, we can make any needed adjustments to comply with quorum requirements.

6. Review draft schedule for upcoming meeting topics and next request for proposals (RFP)

A Van Eaton: Our next meeting, on May 21st, will be a hybrid meeting and the main topic will be a presentation from Mayor Wilson on workforce development priorities. We will be sending Board members a little more information about that in advance of the meeting. We encourage you to come in-person if you are able. The agenda items for June are still being decided on.

7. Adjournment

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

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

Meeting Materials:

- 4/16/26 Mtg Notice and Agenda
- draft 3/19/26 Mtg Minutes
- JCRT Received and Estimated Linkage Fees (4.14.26)
- JCRT Investment Priority Tracker (4.14.26)
- MNWB Labor Market Information Presentation (4.14.2026)
- March 2026 Memo Re: Draft Schedule for Meeting Topics and Next RFP Steps

Approved 6/18/2026