



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: Hybrid: via Zoom Meeting and in-person at 167-169 Holland St, Somerville
Date: June 18, 2026
Time: 6:30 PM

Attendance

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

Meeting Minutes

V Choitz: Meeting called to order at 6:32pm. Quorum established with 6 trustees in attendance. W Mbah and A Van Eaton joined after attendance was taken.

W Blackmer delivered house rules about technology.

1. Review and approval of past meeting minutes

V Choitz: Attached in meeting materials was a draft of the April 16th meeting minutes. Are there any edits or revisions to be made to the meeting minutes before we seek a motion? I noticed an error with the page numbers. Can this be corrected before posting? That's the only edit I have.

W Blackmer: Yes.

a. Vote to approve April 16th meeting minutes

Motion: T Bent makes motion to approve April 16th meeting minutes. S Dinka seconds the motion.

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

2. Announcing new Senior Workforce Development Planner

R Nadkarni: We are very excited to announce that William Blackmer has been selected as our new Senior Workforce Development Planner role and we are excited for him to take on this more strategic leadership role. He will be taking on a lot of our partnership building work and connecting them with our employer community. It will take us a few months to hire his replacement, but William will be part of the search process and will help train and plan for a smooth transition. He will also bring his expertise in his new role back to inform the JCRT.

J Luria: What is the composition of the workforce development team at the City of Somerville?

R Nadkarni: It is a team of two, with the Workforce Development Coordinator role currently vacant. This is a team within the Economic Development Division.

3. Updates on Active Programs and Upcoming Programs

V Choitz: Included in meeting materials was a list of our active and upcoming programs. Materials also included 3 letters from grantees requesting amendments to their current grant agreements.

a. Vote to approve a no-cost extension for Bunker Hill Community College's Somerville English Language Learner Program through September 30, 2026.

V Choitz: Bunker Hill is requesting a one-month no-cost extension through September 30th of this year for additional time to enroll and provide contextualized ESL to additional Somerville residents. Basically, they fell behind a little bit in their enrollment. They have 58 out of their goal of 100. They're planning to offer additional sections of classes June through August in order to make up for that enrollment deficit.

W Blackmer: I'd like to add that they do have about 45 students queued up to hopefully start as soon as approval happens.

J Luria: Do we have an expectation that they may need a further extension beyond just one month? I'd propose a vote to approve a no-cost extension for Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC)'s Somerville English Language Learner Program through January 30, 2027.

Motion: T Bent makes motion. J Hachey seconds the motion.

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

b. Vote to approve scope amendment allowing Somerville Arts Council to re-enroll a Somerville resident from a previous Nibble Entrepreneurship Program cohort to participate in their 1-year Chef-in-Residency program.

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

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

c. Vote to approve no-cost extension for Just A Start's Adult Career Training Programs through September 30, 2026.

Motion: S Dinka makes motion. R Nadkarni seconds the motion.

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

d. Vote to obligate \$128,289.00 to the Workforce Development Coordinator position to cover 100% from FY27-FY29.

R Nadkarni: I am going to recuse myself from this vote, so 6 additional Board members need to be present for this vote to be taken. As was shared in the meeting materials, due to a challenging budget year and forecast for the City, the City is looking at all current vacancies to determine if there are any grants or additional funding sources that can be used. The JCRT has currently committed to funding the Workforce Development Coordinator role at 50% for the next two fiscal years. The current ask is for the JCRT to fund this role at 100% for fiscal year 27 through fiscal year 29. The vote represents the current funding gap.

T Bent: Can you explain the calculations?

W Blackmer: An estimate of \$230,400 is needed to cover 100% of the Workforce Development Coordinator role for FY27-FY29. There is currently a balance of \$102,111 that has been committed to the Workforce Development Coordinator role. Thus, the commitment request is \$128,289.

T Bent: If the JCRT does receive an influx of cash in the coming years, would the City reconsider this?

R Nadkarni: The JCRT is voting to obligate the funds and they are being transferred as needed on an annual basis.

J Luria: Should we be planning funding for FY29 given the JCRT's economic picture?

R Nadkarni: We do currently have some programs funded into 2028 and our next request for proposals will likely fund programs into fiscal year 2029.

W Blackmer: I noticed that Anika Van Eaton has joined the meeting. This means that there are sufficient board members to vote on this item.

Motion: J Luria makes motion. T Bent seconds the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 6-0. R Nadkarni recused herself from the vote.

4. Multi-Member Bodies Review Committee update

W Blackmer: One provision of the new City Charter is that every 10 years a committee reviews all multi-member bodies (i.e. Boards, Commissions, and Committees) and files recommendations for any changes to be made to a body's functions, composition, etc. This process will continue until the recommendations are made in December. While this review is taking place, new Board appointments are only being made in emergency situations. Please be in touch with me regarding any questions.

V Choitz: We are next going to take item 6 on the agenda out of order.

6. Mayor Wilson Presentation on Workforce Development Priorities

V Choitz: We are excited to be joined tonight by Mayor Wilson who will be presenting on his administration's workforce development priorities. Before turning it over to the Mayor, I invite each Board member to please introduce yourself and your role.

All present Board members introduced themselves.

J Wilson: The JCRT does particularly important work. The City needs to improve its ratio of jobs to residents, connect residents with good local jobs, career and economic opportunities, and make sure they have the skills and knowledge to succeed in meaningful careers. We want to work in close concert with local businesses and support their workforce needs.

We can make the greatest impact by focusing on 3 interconnected areas of workforce development:

- 1. Serving target populations including youth up to age 25 and our foreign-trained and immigrant workforce.*
 - a. The JCRT is already playing a significant role by funding programs such as the Metro North Workforce Board's STEM internship program and the Nibble entrepreneurship program.*
 - b. The City is supporting this work by increasing collaboration between the City and Somerville Public Schools (SPS) to support career readiness and awareness for SPS youth as they transition from K-8 to high school and from high school into college and careers.*
- 2. Increasing engagement with the business community*
 - a. Addressed by the JCRT via funding industry-specific programs that partner closely with employers and connect residents to experiential learning*
 - b. William Blackmer and his team will play a significant role in strengthening our relationships with Somerville employers as will as the Mayor's Office's new Senior Labor Advisor, Steve Tolman.*

- c. *The City is also partnering closely with the Somerville Chamber of Commerce on this initiative.*
- 3. *Supporting pipelines into SPS and City jobs*
 - a. *Addressed by the JCRT by funding the Good Municipal Jobs Training Program and SCALE's contextualized training pathways.*
 - b. *The City supports this work through initiatives such as the "Let's Get Workin'" partnership between the Center for Career and Technical Education, (CTE), and the City of Somerville's Department of Public Works to expand career exploration and exposure in the trades and green economy to Somerville residents.*

In reflecting on the Talent Equity Playbook that set the City's workforce development strategy, it should continue to be implemented despite some changing economic conditions since 2018. The tenets of that plan should still guide the JCRT's investments.

Regarding the JCRT's upcoming request for proposals (RFP), I ask the JCRT to prioritize proposals that feature collaboration between City departments, Somerville Public Schools, training and education providers, and employers. This may require there to be a longer RFP process and making sure that this RFP is on the radar of a wider number of employers and partners. The RFP should also emphasize funding for wraparound supports for training participants, and our desire for trainings to be future proof and incorporate durable skills.

I also want to express gratitude to the JCRT for its support for the continued funding of the Workforce Development Coordinator position. I'm happy to take questions from the Board members.

T Bent: The challenging economic conditions present a good opportunity for the City and the JCRT to work more strategically with our local employers on our shared goals.

J Wilson: Yes, and we are going to do everything we can to continue to attract business and development to Somerville. TransMedics is a great success, and we are starting to see the knock-on effects of that work.

S Dinka: I'm following your leadership plan and am very hopeful. We are prioritizing programs that offer quality jobs and often collaborate with organizations within the City of Somerville, some who are less experienced with workforce development. How close are you with the nonprofit organizations in the City of Somerville?

J Wilson: I am a former non-profit executive for an organization in Somerville. We have strong relationships with nonprofit leaders including David Gibbs at the Community Action Agency of Somerville. In addition to hiring the Senior Labor Advisor role, we also hired Brenna Broderick as the Community Partnerships Liaison as a point of contact in the Mayor's Office for our nonprofit partners. The City relies on nonprofits to support our community and it is a challenging time for nonprofit organizations. One of my priorities is to help improvement our payment process to nonprofits to make it easier for them to operate and contribute to the work of the JCRT.

V Choitz: It is exciting to hear that your agenda includes increasing collaboration as this has been a goal of ours and with our Good Municipal Jobs RFP, we did have some trouble getting all parties on board including unions and employers. I also see at a national level successful industry partnerships do need a central person or organization to coordinate projects. This will be important for us to remember and highlight as we think about the language of future RFPs.

J Wilson: It is important for the City to maintain positive relationships with both internal and external organized labor.

V Choitz: The JCRT does also still have some funds obligated towards helping employer improve job quality and prevent wage theft.

J Wilson: Regarding wage theft, we have been closely looking at the role and strategies that other municipalities are taking to combat wage theft and disincentivize these practices to inform the work of our Wage Theft Advisory Committee.

V Choitz: It is important to help prevent wage theft and also help employers understand how creating quality jobs is good for their businesses.

R Nadkarni: We have been having conversations with community groups that are interested in improving the quality of jobs for nonprofits workers and businesses.

J Wilson: Thank you for having me join for this conversation.

V Choitz: It is great to hear that the Mayor is onboard with our strategy and continues to endorse the Talent Equity Playbook.

R Nadkarni: One item we will be working on with the Mayor is helping raise the visibility of JCRT and our partners as a point of attraction to employers and the business community.

V Choitz: We will now continue with agenda item 5.

5. Review Received and Estimated Linkage Fees for 2026

W Blackmer: The current uncommitted balance sits just above \$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.

7. Labor Market Information Presentation reflections

V Choitz: In April, we were joined by Penny and Kelly from MassHire Metro North Workforce Board who presented on regional labor market information. Are there any reflections from their presentation and resulting discussion that Board members would like to share?

T Bent: I was surprised by the lack of representation of construction jobs in the data they presented.

J Luria: The data showed a very high number of healthcare openings in Somerville and the Metro North region. More than I expected.

V Choitz: A takeaway for me is that it is important with a relatively open RFP that applicants make a strong case for the JCRT to invest in training for a specific industry.

R Nadkarni: This RFP made me think about one of the programs we ended up not funding a few years ago was EPIC healthcare training. It appears that there are lots of opportunities for graduates with healthcare certifications.

T Bent: The data also showed that driver's licenses remain an important requirement for many jobs and for residents to be able to access job training and co-ops.

V Choitz: Another point that came out of our labor market conversation was the need for employer-paid student internships. It reminded me of the experiential learning strategy in the Talent Equity Playbook and is one proven way that young people can breakthrough into companies with career opportunities.

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

V Choitz: Lastly, we will review the draft schedule for upcoming meetings and what steps the RFP subcommittee will be taking to prepare for the RFP release. In April, we took names of volunteers interested in serving on that subcommittee. The members are Anika, Silvana, Rachel, and Tom. They will meet soon to begin reviewing the last RFP and discuss incorporating labor market info, the Mayor's priorities, and information from our subsequent meetings into the next RFP. Are there any questions about our upcoming schedule?

W Blackmer: Jim and Tom, will you still be able to present on Somerville Center for Career and Technical Education (CTE) at our July 16th meeting?

J Hachey: Yes, July 16th should work.

W Blackmer: Then, for August, we will report on meetings with key employers, in September we will preview then annual report and share updates on grantee performance and successes. Then, the end of the year will focus on preparing and holding our annual meeting and getting ready for the launch of our next RFP in the new year. Are there any questions, comments, or concerns about the schedule?

V Choitz: Would August 20th work as a potential date to have an employer like TransMedics or Mass General Brigham come speak to the JCRT? Or alternatively on October 15th?

Councilor Mbah joined the meeting.

W Blackmer: Yes, I will make a note of those dates for a possible employer visit.

9. Adjournment

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

Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 7-0.

Meeting Materials:

- 6/18/26 Mtg Notice and Agenda
- draft 4/16/26 Mtg Minutes
- JCRT Investment Priority Tracker (6.16.26)
- BHCC no-cost extension request letter
- Somerville Arts Council Nibble amendment request letter
- Just A Start no-cost extension request letter
- June 2026 Memo Re Request to fund workforce development coordinator
- JCRT Received and Estimated Linkage Fees (6.9.26)
- MNWB Labor Market Information Presentation (4.14.2026)
- (reshared) March 2026 Memo Re: Draft Schedule for Meeting Topics and Next RFP Steps

Approved 7/16/2026