



City of Somerville, Massachusetts Job Creation and Retention Trust

Notice of Special Meeting and Meeting Agenda

Somerville Job Creation and Retention Trust

Tuesday, November 12th, at 6:00pm

Visiting Nurses Association, 259 Lowell St.

3rd Floor Community Room

In attendance: Vickie Choitz, Anika Van Eaton, Thomas Bent, Silvana Dinka, Rand Wilson, Matthew McLaughlin, Thomas Galligani, Josh Grehan

The meeting began at 6:03pm

1. Presentation on jobs linkage and initial investment ideas

The JCRT Board of Trustees presented on their initial investment ideas. The presentation can be found at Somervillema.gov/jcrt under the “Documents and Information” tab.

2. Public discussion

- Bill Cavallini noted the Union Square Neighborhood Council recently signed community benefits agreement and requested that funds from the JCRT go towards those who have been displaced in jobs and house. He also expressed support for the rapid response investment. Noted that many workers have barriers beyond transportation and ESOL and those other needs should be considered as well.
- Resident from 24 Walnut St. expressed support for funding a workers’ center.
- Spencer Strub expressed support for a workers’ center. Also asked about what the JCRT can do to help prepare employers and employees for a new climate reality.
- Jody Sugarman of Masscosh noted that the workers center they run in Boston received referrals from Somerville often. Also mentioned that there are many immigrant rights organizations such as the Brazilian Workers’ Center and the Immigrant Workers’ Center Collaborative that would support a local Somerville effort. This would be a one-stop shop for workers to access career resources, education, worker rights education and help with redress, empowerment and peer leadership, gathering place for day laborers.

- Al Vega of Masscosh noted that Centro Presente, which used to be located in Somerville, still gets contacted by Somerville residents.
- Danyal Najmi of SCC had several suggestions – having commitments from employers can be very beneficial to training programs, educational and English barriers of entry should be lowered for training programs, and that childcare is a huge barrier to a lot of people. Perhaps a childcare coop could be created.
- Jay Jain of 350 Mass urged the JCRT to adopt elements of a paid internship or apprenticeship model which has been successful in other countries. He noted in particular that STEM education for low-income youth and residents was important. He also asked if collaboration opportunities were available for small businesses.
 - Vicky Choitz responded that the JCRT had looked very closely at labor market data in regards to in-demand STEM occupations.
- Blake Roberts-Crall of SCC suggested that gap-funding for students be expanded beyond one-time challenges and that a wage or stipend be offered for training program attendance. She also expressed support for career-navigation support and additional ESOL and digital literacy training which is a big challenge to many of SCC's clients. She also seconded requests for workers's rights training and a workers' center but also support for supervisors such as conflict-management training for managers of front-line workers.
- Mary Jo Connelly of Jobs for Somerville stressed the importance of supporting existing organizations, not just exciting new programs. She also urged the JCRT to consider that jobs linkage was always intended as an anti-displacement strategy.
- Rachel Distler of Our Revolution Somerville echoed previous sentiments and spoke in favor of a workers' center as well as a childcare cooperative. She also noted that, in regards to HR resources for small businesses, it's not true that an HR department is always thinking about a worker's rights.
- Miriam Ortiz of Just-a-Start suggested that the City use its convening power to bring employers to the table rather than individual training providers go out to recruit employer partners on their own. She also supported the idea of stipending programs.
- Rene Mardones of Jobs for Somerville and SCC thanked the JCRT for reaching out to the community. He urged more support for the First Source program and other existing programs. He also noted that he has been working with the Casino Action Network, now the Jobs Action Network that focuses on workers in new industries.
- Marcy Goldstein-Gelb expressed support for paid apprenticeships and the support of existing organizations like SCC. She also noted that workers' rights training are often not sufficient as workers may get fired if they speak up a work. This is why a workers' center can be a resource.
- Greg Karczewski of Union Square Station Associates said that he is looking forward to working with the JCRT and asked how the Trust would prioritize investments based on impact.
 - Vickiy Choitz and Rand Wilson responded that they have discussed including regular evaluations into programming.
- Bill Valleta asked how this board would ensure success as the dollar amount was not that much.
 - Rand Wilson noted that the diversity of experiences on the JCRT would ensure that the Trust comes up with successful programs.

- Thomas Galligani noted that linkage is the newest funding source for workforce development in the State in an ecosystem of generally declining funding. The JCRT hoped to be able to use these funds to leverage others.
- Bill Durham spoke in support of data collection and data transparency and keeping updated data on the JCRT website for the public to see. He also suggested Tufts as a facility to leverage.
- Blake Roberts-Crall asked if the JCRT would spend all money at once.
 - Thomas Bent spoke about the impact and thinking about the long-term
 - Josh Grehan spoke about planning spending over a period of time based on economic cycles.
- Vicky Choitz asked about the competition a workers center would pose to local organizations
 - Marcy Goldstein-Gelb said that conversations have been happening locally with existing organizations. She noted that having an organization separate from SCC would be useful as there could be a perceived conflict with mission.
- Silvana Dinka hoped that the JCRT reduced waiting lists in Somerville, such as for training programs and childcare.

3. Adjournment

Thomas Bent made a motion to adjourn. Rand Wilson seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 pm.