



Vickie Choitz, Managing Trustee  
Anika Van Eaton, Co-Manager

# City of Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust Monthly Meeting

*Trustees*  
Thomas Bent  
Lisa Cook  
Silvana Dinka  
Thomas F. Galligani, Jr.  
Colleen Moran  
JT Scott  
Rand Wilson

## Meeting Minutes

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**Location:** Online via GoToWebinar Platform  
**Date:** April 26, 2022  
**Time:** 6:05 PM

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### Attendance

- Trustees: Thomas Bent, Vickie Choitz, Lisa Cook, Silvana Dinka, Colleen Moran, JT Scott, Anika Van Eaton, and Rand Wilson
- Economic Development Staff: Jennifer Mancia, William Blackmer

### Meeting Minutes

- V Choitz: Meeting called to order at 6:05pm. Quorum established with 7 trustees in attendance. S Dinka joined after attendance roll call.
- W Blackmer: House rules about technology delivered.

#### 1. Review and Approval of March 15 Meeting Minutes

V Choitz: No edits needed, but want to flag a couple of issues we would like updates on at this meeting or the May meeting:

- Incoming Somerville Employers' Needs Analysis Update
  - Professional Development Fund and Job Training Fund
  - Request to list JCRT contributors on the webpage
- Motion: T Bent makes motion to approve March 15, 2022 meeting minutes. A Van Eaton seconds the motion.
  - Roll Call Vote: Motion passes by vote of 8-0 approving March 15, 2022 meeting minutes.

#### 2. Open Meeting Law Training Debrief

- V Choitz: I had 6 takeaways from the training
  - 1) City Staff to check w/ Solicitor about whether subcommittee meeting minutes need to be posted if no votes or actions are taken.
  - 2) When sending emails with articles or agenda topics, just send to the liaison, W Blackmer, and they can be discussed at the next meeting. Do not send to the entire Board.
  - 3) L Cook's role as both a Board Member and as a Grantee and any actions to take in addition to recusal.
  - 4) Personal email addresses used for JCRT purposes are subject to public records requests. One solution is to cc or bcc W Blackmer on all communications.
  - 5) Robert's Rules of Order – legally we don't have to follow them. Procedurally it is recommended to follow making motions, seconding, following quorums, etc.

- Should an issue be discussed before or after a motion has been made for a vote?
  - My preference is to have the discussion prior to the motion being made.
    - Board in agreement about this consistent procedure.
- 6) These meetings will remain virtual likely through July. City is working on training and technology related to holding hybrid meetings.

### 3. Grantee Updates and Renewal Investments

- W Blackmer: **Table 1** shows a summary of recent investments including the renewal of Just-A-Start and the Welcome Project grants as well as the Childcare Career Advancement Initiative. **Table 2** previews City staff proposal for May 2022 meeting votes. We have around \$506,000 in uncommitted funds currently and are recommending renewals for AACA and Per Scholas. AACA achieved 18 out of 20 employment retentions. They have expressed interest in once again serving 20 residents. Per Scholas has achieved 11 out of 15 job placements and is on-track to reach their organizational KPI for time to placement. They are interested in again serving 15 residents and providing larger participant stipends.

SCALE has proposed a grant restructuring to serve more residents and meet residents needs in terms of their curriculum. BHCC contract ends on July 1, 2022 and they have surpassed their enrollment goal.

They are interested in serving 150 residents in the coming year.

V Choitz: It's really important that the board members are sent all grantee reports to review them well in advance of funding votes. I'd also like to see SCALE's proposed grant restructuring as soon as possible.

A Van Eaton: Is there merit in moving all the funding votes to June?

- W Blackmer: We were hoping to hold votes in May to prevent disruption of service delivery for grantees. Based on the JCRT funds we are anticipating, I don't envision the JCRT being in a position where they would have to choose between which grantees to renew, from a financial standpoint.
- J Mancina: W Blackmer and I have also initiated a review of the procurement process to see if we need to go through the formal Procurement process, but these votes are scheduled mostly out of respect to the existing grantees.
- T Bent: I would be open to voting in May 2022 and June 2022 to prevent disruption especially for the industry-specific training providers.
- V Choitz: It sounds like we will plan to vote on AACA and Per Scholas pending the receipt of the reports and potentially on SCALE depending on the availability of funds.

A Van Eaton: Do we have projections for the expected incoming funds and timing?

- W Blackmer: I did not include those numbers in this meeting due to the amount of variance. We have 4 developer checks on the near horizon and didn't want to factor those into the voting conversation until we have those funds in hand.

A Van Eaton: I would like to request to bring an updated version of the spreadsheet that B Sommer created to future meetings that showed the different developments, where they were in within the permit process. It is difficult to prioritize funding when we don't have a picture of what incoming funds will be.

V Choitz: Has BHCC helped 131 participants complete their programming already?

- W Blackmer: I will need to circle back to review the contract deliverables and request for them to send an interim report from BHCC regarding participant completion.

- L Cook: The measurables should not just be enrollment and completion; they should also be measuring student learning gains.
- A. Van Eaton: Reviewing the report also gives us the opportunity to address grantee challenges.

#### 4. Discussion on Proposed New Investments

J Mancia: On Table 3, the first three listed items are topics we've previously discussed: the Good Municipal Job Training, The Job Training Scholarship, and the Professional Development for Adult Ed Workers and Workforce Development Providers.

- V Choitz: I don't think the Good Municipal Job Training is ready for a vote in June since the Board hasn't reviewed the draft. T Bent in agreement.
- J Mancia: The idea of voting on funding twice a year is appearing less realistic.

J Mancia: The Job Training Scholarship was an idea we have been discussing to fund Somerville residents in attending a training of their choosing. The City is currently working on posting a position that would oversee this fund and administer other similar funds. However, if this does not materialize in ample time, W Blackmer and I are ready to manage this scholarship fund. W Blackmer and I are working on a draft of the description for the Professional Development for Adult Ed Workers and Workforce Development Providers and will share this with the Managing Trustees by the end of the week.

- V Choitz: The National Fund for Workforce Solutions annual conference in September in Minneapolis would be an ideal opportunity for a Somerville provider to attend and bring back their findings to their organization. This is one opportunity that could be a great fit.

J Mancia: Some of the following items have come out of conversations that W Blackmer and I have had with employers, providers, and colleagues in neighboring cities. In discussion around the cannabis industry, we have learned that our colleagues are working with an organization called CultivatEd to provide CORI expungement and job placement services. W Blackmer and I have identified this population as one that has had difficulty accessing employment and training opportunities.

We will discuss the Job Quality Tool idea below, but we were considering using the \$81,000 that had previously been set aside to support the small business job quality practices.

Vocational training materials have been mentioned by two of our colleagues, at CTE and at Just A Start, as they need to update outdated equipment to train students on the latest technologies. J Mancia will share list of requested materials with T Bent.

Learn and Earn/Internship Program is another idea. We have recently connected this program with the City of Somerville who will be hiring an intern from Bunker Hill to support onboarding for the Mayor Summer Jobs Program.

New Collar/Green Jobs: This idea is related to upskilling individuals who are in the fossil fuel and energy industries that are rapidly evolving. This can especially be important for individuals seeking to enter union trades.

A Van Eaton: I think that these funding ideas are all good to consider. What would be helpful would be to separate these new ideas out into a different list so that it can be determined which were voted on in last year's funding priorities rankings and which are new.

- V Choitz: These new ideas are getting ahead of the prioritization process we have been following. They should be revisited as part of our next brainstorm to identify the gaps between what has previously been funded and the strategies of the Talent Equity Playbook.
- J Mancina: Next meeting we will look at incoming funds, remind ourselves of the priorities, work on funding these priorities, and then discuss these new investment ideas in July and August.
- V Choitz: Investment in the staff coordinator role should be listed as a June vote.

## 5. Good City Jobs Training Program Update

- A Van Eaton: Please share a plan for the Good city jobs training ahead of the May meeting so that we can have a more robust conversation on this item at that time.

## 6. JVS Job Quality Tool and Promoting Small Business Job Quality

V Choitz: The Trust voted to invest not only in worker rights and wage theft training, but also to support small businesses and entrepreneurs with training on human resources and job quality practices. We were not able to find a provider to deliver this training. When Rand shared the information about the job quality benchmarking tools, including the one developed by JVS Boston to help companies identify areas to improve the quality of their jobs, I thought this could be a possible area to pivot and address this topic of job quality. I propose the formation of a subcommittee who can explore how we can leverage this tool to support Somerville businesses.

One idea would be to hire JVS to use their tool to work with 10 Somerville employers to go through the benchmarking process and then receive technical support from JVS to improve the quality of their jobs. Another option could be for JVS to train a local provider on using this tool to support local businesses.

- C Moran: We have used this tool as an employer. It is well-crafted and we received good support from JVS on how to implement changes. As a result of their support, we have been working on adjusting salary levels for our CNA roles.

V Choitz, C Moran, T Bent, and R Wilson all expressed interest in joining subcommittee.

## 7. Additional Items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

- J Mancina: The City is supporting SCC in hosting a job fair at the Mystic Learning Center on May 26<sup>th</sup> from 10am-2pm. Developers have assisted with recruiting employers. We would like the Board members to assist in getting the word out about this event. There will be more than 40 employers and resource providers in attendance. We will share the flyer soon.
  - W Blackmer: JCRT-funded providers will also have tables there as well.
- V Choitz: J Mancina and W Blackmer, please send as soon as possible any grant reports as well as SCALE's proposed restructuring. Information can come to the Board in two batches, one ASAP and once closer to the May meeting. Also for May and June since we will be having votes, we need a 2/3 majority of the Board to pass funding votes, so please make sure to attend those meetings.

## 8. Adjournment

- Motion: T Bent makes motion to adjourn. Seconded by R Wilson.

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

Minutes approved on 5/17/2022.