

MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board

Full Board Meeting Minutes (draft)

Date: September 18, 2025

Time: Called to order at 8:02 AM

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

Attendees:

Erin Anhalt, Andrea Bordenca, Deborah Christakos, Kristin Cole, Libby Hernandez, Colleen Kucinski, Laurie Millman, Liz Buxton, Mpress Nembhard, Brian Pearson, Sarah Sargent, Neil Scanlon, Allison van der Velden

Unable to attend:

Alex Colonna, Jessye Deane, Paula Euber, Andy Linkenhoker, Ashley McFarlane, Jeff Napolitano, Shardool Pamar, Alan Wolf, Sue Surner

1. Call to Order and Quorum

- **Chair:** Allison van der Velden (departed at 8:30 AM; baton passed to Vice Chair Kristin Cole).
- Quorum was confirmed with at least 12 members present.

2. Approval of Minutes (June 5th Meeting)

- Motion to approve: Neil Scanlon.
- Second: Kristin Cole.
- Vote: Approved with one abstention (Liz Buxton, absent at prior meeting).

3. Board Member Introductions

- All members introduced themselves, including several new members.
- Organizations represented included Worthington Assembly, FCCDC Western Mass Food Processing Center, Pioneer Valley Food Tours, The Literacy Project, DESCO Service, Community Health Center of Franklin County, MassHire DCS, Greenfield Community College, City of Greenfield, Valley CDC, Greenfield Savings Bank, Adventure East, and others.

4. Board Member Spotlight – Neil Scanlon, Worthington Assembly

- Shared overview of Worthington Assembly (South Deerfield).
- Described decentralized hiring model:
 - Candidates listen to a company culture podcast.
 - Self-guided factory tours to speak with staff.
 - Paid 3-day working interviews, followed by 30-day trial with 360 evaluations.
 - Emphasis on humility, peer evaluations, and a positive workplace culture.

5. Policy Approvals

Presented by: Maura Geary

Policies Reviewed and Approved (as a bundle):

1. Individual Training Account (ITA) Policy
2. Training-Related Expenses Policy (new cap: \$650)
3. Supportive Services Policy (new cap: \$650; add WIOA Youth)
 - Motion: Kristin Cole; Second: Andrea Bordenca
 - Approved unanimously.

New Policy: WIOA Youth Incentive Policy

- Developed by Zach Podhorzer in consultation with Hampden & Berkshire regions.
- Provides incentives for youth milestones (up to \$750/year).
- Motion: Neil Scanlon; Second: Deborah Christakos.
- Approved unanimously.

6. Management Team Introductions

- **Sarah Wilson & Maura Geary** – Co-Executive Directors.
- **Gregg Thompson** – FHETC Director (background: Viability, YMCA; fun fact: Star Wars fan, named son Luke).
- **Zach Podhorzer** – Young Adult Programs Director (background: teaching, DEI consulting; fun fact: visited all 50 states).
- **Sarah Hoecker** – Interim Career Services Director (background: workforce development; fun fact: loves rollerblading).
- **Cindy Ray** – Ops Manager (introduction postponed due to technical difficulties; fun fact: placed 2nd in Key Fob Trials at MHFH Office Olympics).

7. Youth Programs Update

Presenter: Zach Podhorzer

- **WIOA Out-of-School Youth:** Enrollment growing through Literacy Project, DA's office, schools.
- **Connecting Activities:** Schools reassigned post-merger; calendar filling with career fairs, trainings, and Construction Day (May 1).
- **YouthWorks:** 35 youth participated this summer; ~150 planned for school year across 12 cohorts.
- **New Initiatives:**
 - Young Adult Library drop-in hours expanding (Greenfield, Forbes, Orange, Athol).
 - Launch of Tier 4 YouthWorks Cohort in partnership with MassCEC Youth Climate Corps (January).

8. Local Plan Overview

Presenter: Maura Geary

- Annual plan unlocks \$3.8M in workforce funding.
- Priorities:
 - Serve 3,600 job seekers.
 - Engage 500 employers.
 - Expand credential-based opportunities for youth.

- Advance agricultural workforce strategies.
- Supports compliance with WIOA and new firewall (FHETC Director role).

9. Sector Initiatives

Presenter: Sarah Wilson

- **Manufacturing:** Regional convening with Hampden County Workforce Board planned for November.
- **Outdoor Recreation:** Western Mass Outdoor Rec Alliance Q1 meeting on Sept 11 convening with MA Office of Outdoor Recreation; GCC hosting Summit Nov 17; apprenticeship planning grant submitted.
- **Agriculture:** Labor market data shows growth in Franklin/Hampshire region; business services team to engage local farms; collaboration with board member Libby Hernandez.

10. Grant Updates

Presenter: Maura Geary

- **National Dislocated Worker Grant** – Support for workers impacted by layoffs (Starrett Co., Athol).
- **Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF)** – Proposal with LifePath and health centers; training for adults 55+ in healthcare office roles.
- **GROW Registered Apprenticeship Proposals** (with GCC):
 - Dental Assistant apprenticeship.
 - HVAC/Clean Energy pre-apprenticeship (youth).
 - Outdoor Recreation apprenticeship planning grant.

11. Committees and Nominations

Presenter: Sarah Wilson

Shared overview of existing committees, requesting volunteers from new members.

- **Executive Committee:** Make time-sensitive decisions when full Board can not convene; provide oversight and guidance to EDs; supports in strategic planning. Meets 4x/year
- **Finance Committee:** Reviews annual budget; monitors performance against the budget throughout the year; provides guidance on adjustments if revenue or expenses deviate significantly. Meets 3x/year.
- **Nomination Committee:** Recruit, vet, and recommend new Board members and officers. Meets 2x/year.
- **Performance Oversight Committee:** Review standards and criteria for the performance of programs and participants and the actual performance of the programs. Meets 2x/year.

Sarah then shared parameters of Board member membership as required by WIOA law. The Board is currently out of compliance due to private industry membership (must be 51%). Requested that each Board member nominate one private industry individual and send to Sarah/Maura.

11. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn: Neil Scanlon
- Second: Colleen Kucinski

Meeting adjourned at 9:00am.