Small Business Advocacy Council
Tuesday, December 2, 2014
8:30-10:00 AM
Commerce RI

MINUTES

Attendance
Lt. Governor Elizabeth H. Roberts
Secretary of State Ralph A. Mollis
Lt. Governor-elect Daniel McKee
Secretary of State-elect Nellie Gorbea
J.R. Pagliarini, Commerce RI
Mark Hayward, Small Business Administration
Ralph Coppola, Meridian, SBANE
Mark Deion, Deion Associates
Gary Ezovski, Lincoln Environmental Properties
Ron Caniglia,
Miriam Ross, Law Offices of Miriam Ross
Janet Raymond, Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce
David Lucier, Lucier CPA
Bill Vernon, National Federation of Independent Business
Mark Stewart, Rhode Island Small Business Development Center
Nancy Scarduzio, Dept. of Administration/OMB/ORR
Jerri Moon Cantone, JMC Fine Art & Photography
Martha Pughe, North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce
Terry Martiesian, Martiesian & Associates, Small Business Association
Mary Gervais, Center for Women and Enterprise
Steve Gerencser, Secretary of State-elect Gorbea
Maureen Ewing, Office of the Secretary of State
Kelly Carello, Office of the Secretary of State
Sherri Carrera, Commerce RI
Claudia Cardozo, Commerce RI
Vlad Ibarra, Office of the Lieutenant Governor

I. Opening Remarks *Lieutenant Governor Roberts*

The Chair made a motion to approve the minutes; the motion was seconded and approved.
The Chair hoped everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving Holiday and shopped locally during Small Business Saturday. The latest available research as of 2013 showed that consumers who were aware of Small Business Saturday spent roughly $5.7 billion with independent merchants.

The Chair stated that today's meeting would serve as a farewell to her administration and to focus on some of the legislative initiatives for 2015 that the Small Business Economic Summit would explore. Yet, she took a moment to thank the SBAC subcommittee chairs: Legislation: Mark Hayward and Senator Josh Miller; Regulations: Gary Ezovski and Ron Caniglia; and Resources & Retention (Workforce Development) John Gregory and Stephen Boyle.
The Chair expressed how the Small Business Economic Summit has been a powerful tool of action for the Council including the drafting of bills on key legislative initiatives for the business community. She recalled fondly the passage of the Bi-weekly Pay legislation on both chambers after over a decade of advocacy. Likewise, regulatory changes under the leadership of the SBAC Chairs; and support for initiatives to increase apprenticeship programs in Rhode Island including best practices from Worcester.

The Chair opened the floor to Secretary of State Mollis who thanked all members and participants for their input and for making his programs work better including the Business Expo and the First Stop Business Information Center. Both of these initiatives have enhanced the way small business owners apply for financing, obtain permits, network and get answers from government. He encouraged the newly elected officials to stay involved and learn from the business acumen in the room.

The Chair opened the floor to J.R. Pagliarini who welcomed the membership on behalf of the Commerce RI team and thanked both chairs for their dedicated service.
Mr. Pagliarini discussed the partnership with the SBA and its resource partners to provide free counseling and training to small business owners on a range of aspects of municipal, state and federal procurement. Some of the topics will include construction contracting for the federal government and GSA schedules. He went on to highlight the customer focus of Commerce RI of over 1100 small business engagements from January to October 31st and thanked his dedicated staff for making this possible.

II. Introduction of Lt. Governor-elect McKee & Secretary of State-elect Gorbea

Chair Roberts introduced Lt. Governor-elect Daniel McKee. Mayor McKee as a private citizen, businessman and elected official has spent his adult life fighting for positive change in Rhode Island. He has owned and operated a successful small business in the Blackstone Valley for the past thirty years and has been a member of the board of directors of the Boys and Girls Club of Cumberland-Lincoln. Prior to his election as Lieutenant Governor, he was serving his sixth term as Cumberland's Mayor.

Lt. Governor-elect Mckee spoke about his efforts to position Rhode Island as a more business friendly state and how he looks forward to getting up to speed as he reached out to the membership and stakeholders.

Chair Roberts then introduced SOS-elect Nellie Gorbea. Mrs. Gorbea served as Deputy Secretary of State from 2002 to 2006. She led the conversion of thirty-nine municipal voter lists into a central voter registration system with online access. To encourage small business growth, she streamlined the process of filing business paperwork, creating a first-top business portal on the web. Nellie is a graduate of Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs. She also has a master's degree in public administration from Columbia University.
SOS-elect Gorbea expressed her excitement to be part of this kind of cross-sectoral approach of government and how government works best when grounded on different perspectives. She thanked SOS Mollis for laying down the groundwork with his initiatives and looks forward to having conversations with the membership going forward.

III. Introduction of Council Members & Respective Roles

Chair Roberts went around the room and asked Council members and participants to provide a brief introduction and to discuss their roles and/or functions within the Council. The members thanked the Chair and SOS Mollis for their advocacy, welcomed the newly elected officials and looked forward to working with them.

IV. 2015 Small Business Economic Summit Update *Mark Hayward, RI SBA District Director*

Chair Roberts highlighted how the Small Business Economic Summit (Summit) provides one of the few opportunities to ask business owners and legislators what are the most sensible solutions for the many issues facing the state prior to the start of the legislative session. She then introduced Mr. Hayward to provide an update of the Summit, which will drive the work of the subcommittee groups.

Mr. Hayward took the opportunity to invite the newly elected officials to the annual SBA Block Island trip scheduled for the week prior to the July 4th weekend. The visit provides an opportunity for state officials to hear concerns from Block Island business owners.
Mr. Hayward stated that the Summit would take place on Friday, January 9th at Bryant University and that letters were going out this week. He then opened the floor for the Summit chairs to provide a brief update:

Mr. Coppola chair of the Healthcare committee expressed that the main issues for the committee would be HealthSource RI and its sustainability, the affordability of the Affordable Care Act and the SIM grant.
Mr. Deion chair of the Economic Development committee was concerned with the elimination of the SBA loan guarantee, and TDI and Unemployment Insurance oversight.
Mr. Ezovski chair of the Regulatory committee discussed some of the great strides that

the Council was able to accomplish including Bi-weekly Pay and advance the agenda in electronic permitting, apprenticeship, and the physical alteration process. He stated that the committee's main objective would be to continue to reshape the outlier position of the state in regards to some of its business practices.
Mr. Martiesian co-chair of the Tax committee expressed concern with the discrepancy of vehicle evaluation from community to community and a proposal to repeal the social security tax.
Mrs. Ross co-chair of the Main Street committee discussed further examining transportation, food production and sustainability issues.

V. Closing Remarks *Lieutenant Governor Roberts*

Chair Roberts thanked the membership for the privilege of serving for the past eight years and highlighted how the Council was able to bridge the gap between government and small business owners by providing input to existing laws and regulations, publicly review and discuss recommendations, and lobby for change to improve the small business climate in Rhode Island.