

Small Business Advocacy Council Meeting

Friday, June 17, 2005

8:00 AM

Gem Plumbing

Lincoln, RI

Meeting Minutes

I. Lieutenant Governor Charles J. Fogarty, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 8:13 a.m. In attendance were:

II. In Attendance were:

Lieutenant Governor Charles J. Fogarty, Chair

Jerry Meyer, East Greenwich Chamber of Commerce

Robert Lafond, North Central Chamber of Commerce

Mark Deion, Deion and Associates

Jim Hurton, Narragansett Chamber of Commerce

Josh Miller, Trinity Brewhouse

Joe Cannon, CAS America

Philip Papoojian, Mereco

Julie Larivee, Sovereign Bank

Frances deSousa US SBA

Sherri Carrera, Sec. State First Stop Business Center

Heather Singleton, RI Hospitality Association

Louis Soares, RI EDC

Cheryl Snead, Banneker Industries

John Gregory, Northern RI Chamber of Commerce

Jose Brito, Southside Merchants Association

III. Approval of April, 29 2005 Meeting Minutes

The Chairman called for the approval of the previous meeting minutes. A motion was made and seconded for the approval of the minutes.

IV. Comments from the Chair

Chairman Fogarty welcomed the SBAC to Gem Plumbing and thanked Anthony and Larry Gemma for hosting the SBAC. The Chairman said that after his tour of Gem in May he was enthusiastic about what he saw as a true Rhode Island success story. He said he wanted to have GEM host this meeting in order to familiarize members with the GEM center for performance excellence so they can bring this information back to their constituencies in the business community. Chairman Fogarty said that he hoped the GEM institute can provide a vital education and training tool for the state's business community. He said that GEM is a great example of how the business community can work together to help make the economy strong. Chairman Fogarty

thanked the Council for their assistance in the School-to-Career Expo held in early May. He said the event was a great success and he was most impressed with the students and teachers involved. Chairman Fogarty said that he had the opportunity to visit West Warwick High School earlier in the month and said that that the synergy between the students and the business community in that part of the state was going well and was most impressive. Chairman Fogarty said that the 2005 legislative session would be wrapping up in the coming weeks and that the House Finance Committee would be taking up the budget that afternoon. He said that tax policy office legislation had been heard but no action had been taken on the legislation. The Arts Districts Bill and the Small Business Advocate are both poised to pass the legislature in the coming weeks. He said that over the summer and fall the SBAC would be working on issues to be put forth in front of the joint committee on economic development.

V. SBAC Member Updates

Jerry Meyer said that he was disappointed in the civility of the debate in the House of Representatives. He said that the message that this sends is very negative to how state government operates. Bob Lafond said that on April 28 the North Central Chamber Board of Directors voted to make it an independent chamber and has disaffiliated with the Providence Chamber. Jim Hurton said that the Chamber supported RI Salutes program has been a great success. He said that the program would be rolled out on July 1. The program

offers businesses a chance to provide discounts that help military families. Josh Miller said he is happy to see that the state has agreed on a deal for the Dunkin Donuts Center renovations. Heather Singleton said that the Hospitality and Tourism Association held an economic outlook breakfast and it was a great success. She said the event provided tips and training for the hospitality industry. They also are targeting the 25-35 year old age bracket for recruiting and training. Fran DeSousa said that the SBA family day is being held at the Pawtucket Red Sox in August. The price is \$25 dollars. Sherry Carrera said that the new boards and commissions are being released as of July 1 and that minor changes in the way names are read on the Secretary of States web-site. Julie Larivee said she had met the GEM team at a business expo recently and was impressed with their program. She said she was happy to be able to see their operation firsthand. Bob Hamelin thanked Chairman Fogarty for being on the SBDC radio program entitled "it's your business" on WHJJ last month. Phil Papoosian said that on Thursday June 23 at 7:00 AM the government affairs committee on the SBANE would be meeting on MEREKO. He said that a list of the legislative support can be found at www.sbane.com. Mark Deion said that he had recently been in Washington, DC to discuss small business issues with congressional leaders and the US SBA. He said the goal was to educate congress on the role small business plays in the economy and the continued need for congressional support. He stressed the need for fully funding the US SBA 7 A loan program and the need to appropriately fund the SBA. Joe Cannon said that RIMES is working

with the Arts and Business Council to develop a partnership with the manufacturing community. He said that School to Career in its current form has ended due to lack of federal funds. He said that he is working with a team of interested parties to put together recommendations to continue the work of School to Career. John Gregory said he was pleased to see the North Central Chamber as a stand-alone chamber. He said that the Northern RI Chamber would be having Senator Chaffee speak at their next eggs and issues breakfast meeting. He said it was a priority of the chamber to focus HRIC monies for workforce development and not adult literacy. He said that businesses pay into the fund as a result of a percent of the unemployment tax and that money should be solely redistributed for working training programs. Jose Brito said that the southside micro businesses were looking for training money to grow micro businesses to help that business community.

VI. RI EDC Update

Louis Soares, RI Economic Development Corporation

Louis Soares said that EDC is working to make access to capital programs more flexible. They are focusing on more money for small business loan programs for capital improvement. Every Company Counts is concentrating on tracking outbound and inbound referrals. Louis has been working with the resource partners to increase communication so that there is a shorter response time to inquiries. He said that requests for small businesses looking for real estate was

on the increase. He said that Percision Dental in Smithfield was expanding from 16-30 employees. ECC is working with the RI SBDC on the Rhodebuilder program aimed at training management teams of small businesses – the focus is a “mini MBA”. Louis thanked the members for their ongoing participation with ECC.

VII. Gem Plumbing Business Model: A Rhode Island Success Story

Anthony Gemma, President, Gem Plumbing

Larry Giourard, GEM Center for Performance Excellence

Larry Giourard and Anthony Gemma briefed the SBAC on the Gem Center for Performance Excellence. They presented an outline of the Gem Performance Excellence Model. They said that this program was established in effort to assist organizations with their continuous quality improvement efforts, provide a framework for performance excellence, and to share knowledge, which has been passed down through three generations of Gem Plumbing. They said that they look forward to working with members of the SBAC and small businesses in the state to help companies thrive and grow here in Rhode Island. The members then took a tour of the facility led by Anthony Gemma. Please see attachment 1.

Chairman Fogarty requested a motion for adjournment, which was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 10:15 AM.