

# **Small Business Advocacy Council Meeting**

**Friday, April 29, 2005**

**8:30 AM**

**RI Economic Development Corporation**

**Providence, RI**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**I. Lieutenant Governor Charles J. Fogarty, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 8:40 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**

**Herb Weiss, City of Pawtucket**

**Joe Cannon, CAS America**

**Philip Papoojian, Mereco**

**Darlene Evans, South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce**

**Jeff Broadhead, Inner Business**

**Moe Paradis**

**Ed Greene, CRIDCO**

**Denise Barge, RI MIDC**

**Justin Aina, Urban Ventures**

**Julie Larivee, Sovereign Bank**

**Debora Saccocio**

**Ann Rhodes**

**Christopher Koller, RI Health Insurance Commissioner**

**Michael McMahon, Executive Director, RI EDC**

### **III. Approval of March 5, 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 Chris Koller, RI Health Commissioner and Lizann Gibson of the RI School to Career Program to the SBAC meeting. Chairman Fogarty invited members to the School to Career forum being held at the Quonset "O" Club on May 12th from 1-6:30. Chairman Fogarty said that Mike Pare from the Providence Business News and Dean Ed Mazze of the URI Business School would be sitting on the panel discussion. Chairman Fogarty said that the Expo is a great way to highlight School to Career in the state and promote**

the program to prospective business partners. Chairman Fogarty informed the Council that he had visited Gem Plumbing in Lincoln and was very impressed with their operation. He said that he would be interested in hosting a meeting at Gem so that the members could see first hand how Gem executes their business. Chairman Fogarty said that he had recently addressed the SBANE at their monthly breakfast meeting. He said he looks forward to continued work with SBANE in the future. Chairman Fogarty said that the SBAC public policy endorsements have been sent to the leadership of the General Assembly and updated the members on specific pieces of legislation.

Chairman Fogarty welcomed EDC Director Michael McMahon and thanked him for briefing the Council on EDC initiatives.

#### **V. SBAC Member Updates**

Jerry Meyer said that the fire code issue continues to pose a problem to small businesses in his area. He also said that healthcare continues to dominate the issues surrounding small business (See attachment 1). Josh Miller said that the Civic Center is crucial to the success of downcity businesses and should be viewed as a priority for economic development in the State. Justin Aina said that Urban Ventures is a business development network for developing businesses in the inner city. Currently they have expanded from 26 companies to 65. Denise Barge echoed the concerns about healthcare in the minority business community. Jeff Broadhead said that the South Kingstown Chamber is planning an informational session on seasonal employment. Darlene Evans said that on

**October 5 there would be a Southern RI Business Expo at the Ryan Center. Ann Rhodes explained the Small Employers Health Insurance Fairness Act of 2005 (See attachment 2). Mark Deion said that he had recently visited Washington DC for SBA week and briefed the council on the event. Phil Papoosian thanked Chairman Fogarty for speaking at the SBANE breakfast.**

## **VI. RI EDC Update**

**Michael McMahon, RI Economic Development Corporation**

**Director McMahon briefed the Council on the EDC jobs partnership and said it said that the EDC was focused on small businesses, specifically Hispanic businesses. Director McMahon agreed with Chairman Fogarty that the Gem example is one of the best management teams in RI. Director McMahon commended Chairman Fogarty on his tax policy office proposal and stressed the need for the state to undertake this initiative this year. He said this will be critical for the state to develop a strategic plan and multi year look at the economic plan. He said that the state is on track to attract 20,000 new jobs and small business is the engine. EDC has received positive feedback on the Every Company Counts initiative and has been tracking the types of inquiries they have received and references they have forwarded. He said EDC has been encouraging investment throughout the state in Northern Rhode Island, Quonset and Aquidneck Island. The goal of the EDC is to Re-use of existing**

sites. He cited examples of old mills and brownfields as a focus of the EDC. The EDC is also working to encourage the creation of new businesses. Director McMahon cited that the newly restructured Slater Technology Fund is focused on technology and the knowledge based economy. Director McMahon referenced CCRI's training program with Senesco and other marine trades to change the way people think about that industry. Director McMahon concluded his remarks by saying that EDC is focusing on providing access to good jobs and access to quality sites. They are looking to make an impact on the universal factors because they will have the biggest multiplier affect (see attachment 3).

## **VII. The Office of Health Insurance Commissioner: Leading the Way to Improve Healthcare Access, Affordability and Quality**

**Christopher Koller, Rhode Island Health Insurance Commissioner**

Commissioner Koller thanked Chairman Fogarty for inviting him to speak in front of the SBAC. The Commissioner said that health insurance is not like all other insurance and needs to be looked at differently. He said it is also his responsibility to coordinate health policy efforts. The commissioner said his focus is on providers to develop the healthcare system we want. His goal is to foster collaboration among healthcare providers and focus on cost, quality and access. He said that costs have been rising 9 or 10% in State healthcare and that cost is the fundamental issue. Not price per

**service but the number of services we are using. He said that he is focusing on quality in the RI healthcare system. He said his office is also working to close the gap for small businesses and healthcare in the state. Many members of the Council voiced their concerns with the high cost of healthcare in Rhode Island and offered their assistance to commissioner Koller. Commissioner Koller pledged his support and said he looks forward to working with members to help lower healthcare costs for small businesses (see attachment 4).**

## **VI. RI School-to-Career Expo Co-Sponsored by the RI SBAC - May 12, 2005**

**Lizann Gibson, RI School-to-Career**

**Lizann Gibson thanked the SBAC for helping to co-sponsor the event.**

**She thanked Jerry Meyer and Joe Cannon for their work with School-to-Career in the past. She said that school-to-career is looking for ways to mesh the business community with high school education reform. The focus is on proficiency based learning and pairing businesses with students who can match their interest. Lizann said that this Expo will celebrate the successes of School-to-Career and educate the business community on how they can get involved. For more information on School to Career in RI please visit [www.ristc.org](http://www.ristc.org). (See attachment 5)**

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