

# **Small Business Advocacy Council Meeting**

**Friday, September 16, 2005**

**8:30 AM**

**RI Economic Development Corporation**

## **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**

**Mark Deion, Deion and Associates**

**Philip Papoojian, Mereco**

**Sherri Carrera, RI EDC**

**Louis Soares, RI EDC**

**Ed Greene, Sage Business Consultants**

**Bill DeFeo, Code Red BCS**

**Lauren Slocum, Central RI Chamber of Commerce**

**Janet Raymond, Providence Chamber of Commerce**

**Caroline Fairhurst, Wheels of Freedom**

**Susan Fonseca, RIMES Workplace Skills Program**

**Denise Barge, RI MIDC**

**Don Nester, RIMES Workplace Skills Program**

**Kate Nagle, RIMES**

**John Cronin, RIMES**

**Phil Papoojian, MERECO**

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

**Adriana Dawson, RI SBDC**

**Claudia Cardona, Secretary of State First Stop Business Center**

**David Carlin, Northern RI Chamber of Commerce**

### **III. Approval of June 17, 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 members to the meeting. He welcomed Bill DeFeo of NEDRIX - the New England Disaster Recovery Information Exchange. Chairman Fogarty said that in light of Hurricane Katrina, this Network provides recovery plans and business continuity plans to help business in a time of crisis due to disaster. Chairman Fogarty welcomed Don Nester of RIMES who is the coordinator of the Workplace Skills Pilot Program. He said that he had been briefed on this high school business skills pilot program**

**in August and thought that this would be something that SBAC members would be interested in and might be able to assist RIMES. Chairman Fogarty said that he was pleased to see that the administration will be implementing an Office of Tax Policy Analysis similar to the Tax Policy Office legislation endorsed by the SBAC earlier in the session. Chairman Fogarty informed the Council that both the Business Advocate and the Arts Districts Coordination legislation has become law. Chairman Fogarty said that he had been hearing a lot of concern from small businesses about recent targeted tax deals and the Massachusetts sales tax holiday. He said that this is an issue he would like the Council to look at supporting during the upcoming legislative session. Chairman Fogarty commented that he would like to have the chairpersons of the Joint Committee on Economic Development come to brief the Council on their goals at the next meeting. He said that he hopes that the SBAC can work with them to ensure that small business is a part of their agenda and policy recommendations. Chairman Fogarty said that he was looking forward to the upcoming 3rd Annual Latino Business Expo being held at Rhodes on the Pawtuxet on October 14. He also invited members to take part in the SBAC sponsored Southern Rhode Island Statewide Business Expo to be taking place at the Ryan Center on October 5. Chairman Fogarty invited members to join him on the upcoming small business visits in the southern part of the state to promote the Southern Rhode Island Business Expo. He said they would be visiting East Greenwich, South Kingstown and Warwick.**

## **V. SBAC Member Updates**

**Phil Papoosian invited members to the government affairs meeting of SBANE to be held on Thursday September 29 at 7:30 AM at Mereco in West Warwick. Mark Deion said that the US SBA Region 1 Small Business Ombudsman would be in Warwick on September 29th to hear concerns from small businesses. He said that Region 1 Chairman Senator Leo Blais would also be in attendance. John Cronin said that RIMES will be holding a high school business summit on October 19 at the Save the Bay facility in Providence to discuss partnership between the high schools and the business community. He invited SBAC members to attend. Denise Barge said that the MIDC is offering entrepreneurship training seminars that will be starting the last week in September. She asked the members to contact her for more information. Janet Raymond said that on September 22 the Providence Chamber of Commerce is holding a breakfast to celebrate the success of project hope and on October 1 Jim Hagan will be retiring from the Chamber. Lauren Slocum said that Rhode Island is the first state where all the chambers of commerce have signed on to support the Employee Support of the Guard and Reserves (ESGR). She said that this shows the state's commitment to ESGR. Adriana Dawson said that this year's Latino Business Expo is on target to be the most successful one yet. She thanked the SBAC for their sponsorship of the event and invited**

**members to take part.**

## **VI. RI EDC Update**

**Louis Soares, RI Economic Development Corporation**

**Louis Soares opened his remarks by welcoming Sherry Carrera to the Every Company Counts staff. He said that Ms. Carrera, who previously worked for the Secretary of State's First Stop Information Center, would be assisting him with the every Company Counts program to track clients and provide customer service. Louis briefed the Council on ECC programs and provided a spreadsheet on the breakdown of the types of referrals (attachment 1). Louis also gave a Reg Flex update where he explained that he is working with key people in the administration to develop an analysis system (attachment 2). He also provided the various state agencies with a vision of regulatory principals that were sent in order to develop guidelines that will not unfairly harm small businesses when drafting regulations (see attachment 3). Louis said that the EDC has initiated a micro business loan fund to provide capital for micro-businesses that need help to get started (see attachment 4).**

## **VII. NEDRIX: The New England Disaster Recovery Information**

**Exchange:**

**Bill DeFeo, President Code Red Business Continuity Services, LLC**

**Bill DeFeo said that NEDRIX is a non profit organization designed to help prepare businesses for natural and man made disasters to develop and implement business continuity plans. The program is part of a working relationship between business and the public sector. He said that NEDRIX notifies and sends messages to businesses in the event of an emergency and that the program is free to join. He said that the service is available in all 6 New England states and is the liaison between businesses and the Emergency Management Agency of each state. Bill invited members to take part in the program and requested that the SBAC assist in getting the word out on NEDRIX service to other small businesses throughout the state. He invited members to the NEDRIX annual meeting to be held on October 24. He said the meeting consists of business continuity professionals to help assist businesses with what works to mitigate the affects of a disaster (see attachment 5).**

**VIII. Briefing on the Workplace Skills – Applied Learning Pilot Program: Developing Skills required for success in the 21st Century Workforce.**

**Don Nester, RIMES**

**Don Nester told the SBAC about the origins of the program. He said that he had spent his entire career teaching adults problem solving**

and workplace skills at various manufacturing companies throughout Rhode Island. He said that once he retired he began working for RIMES and developed a partnership with a few Rhode Island high schools to implement a workplace skills program. He said that the results so far have been very promising and that the students have benefited from the program. He said that it is his hope to get the program implemented in the statewide education curriculum. He looks forward to continue developing networks with the business community so that they can take part in the workplace skills program.

Phil Papoosian offered the assistance of Mereco, Inc. for any projects that the program is undertaking in the future. Don said that by teaching high school students these skills, it would lessen the need for business owners to spend money on worker training in the future. For more information please see attachment 6.

#### **IX. SBAC Sponsored Southern Rhode Island Business Expo – October 5th 2005 at the Ryan Center**

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

Darlene Evans thanked the SBAC for their sponsorship of the Southern RI Business Expo. She said that she looks forward to visiting businesses in South County to hear their concerns and to promote the Expo. She said that the event had expanded to a statewide business expo encompassing businesses from across the State. She said that the event is going to be a business to business format. The event begins at 2:00 PM and the cost is free with a

**business card. She said that Arlene Violet from Talk Radio WHJJ will be broadcasting live and URI Vice President and former US Congressman Robert Weygand will be giving the keynote address. She said that she looks forward to the event and invited SBAC members to take part.**

**Chairman Fogarty requested a motion for adjournment, which was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 10:11 AM.**