

# **Small Business Advocacy Council**

**November 11, 2008**

## **Meeting minutes**

**Attendees: Gail Ahlers, Eva Anderson, Dino Autiello, Tracy Baran, Mark Binder, Nancy Blount, Davison Bouster, Robin Bugbee, Tree Callanan, Calvin Company, Kelly Carello, Sherri Carrera, Mike Clarkin, Amintha Cinotti, Alan Crisman, John Cronin, Barbara Cullen, Jeffery Deckman, Robin Deckman, Mark Deion, Shawn Donahue, Karla Driscoll, Arthur Dwyer, Darlene Evans, Sidney Goldman, Mary Grady, Conni Harding, Mark Hayward, Christine Jenkins, Ben Jones, Robert Leaver, David Lucier, Laura McNamara, Ed Mazze, Sharon Mazze, Don Nokes, Phil Papoojian, Andrew Rock, Clay Rockefeller, Miriam Ross, Caroly Shumway, Paula Silva, Genie McPherson Trevor, Peter Weill, Herb Weiss, Caroline Wells, Carrie Zaslou,**

**Lt. Governor Roberts called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.**

**Lt. Governor Roberts noted that the minutes of the last two SBAC meetings needed to be approved and that copies of the minutes has been sent via email and were available in hard copy. There being no questions or comments about the minutes, Lt. Governor Roberts asked for approval of the minutes. All present voted to approve the**

minutes.

**Lt. Governor Roberts discussed the economic downturn and the impacts on small businesses.**

**Lt. Governor Roberts introduced Buy Local RI, an initiative to increase sales for locally owned independent businesses. The goal of Buy Local RI will be to get Rhode Islanders to think about Buying RI when they need to make a purchase**

**Lt Governor Roberts stated that sixty-percent of workers in Rhode Island could benefit from this initiative. Lt. Governor Roberts also noted that while individual decisions may seem small, the cumulative impact of a collective shift in buying patterns could be significant. It was reported that studies have shown that 68 cents of every \$1 spent at a locally owned independent businesses stays in the local economy. That is 50% more than spending that same dollar elsewhere.**

**Lt. Governor Roberts indicated that Buy Local RI would employ two concurrent strategies. The first would be a series of “Main Street” events across Rhode Island encouraging everyone to consider supporting locally owned businesses during the holiday season. The second would be to invite interested stakeholders to a follow up meeting on January 7th, 2008 to discuss launching a Buy Local RI network, organization, a web-based search tool and other marketing**

**materials.**

**Lt. Governor Roberts noted that Buy Local RI would not be a government program and that the effort would seek to learn from similar successful endeavors around the country.**

**Lt. Governor Roberts the first guest speaker: Doug Hammond, Executive Director of the Business Alliance for Local Livable Economies (BALLE).**

**Doug Hammond provided an introduction to BALLE, describing locations including Chicago, the Pioneer Valley (MA), Austin and San Francisco where Local First organizations are thriving.**

**Doug Hammond provided examples of how local first campaigns can influence purchasing patterns of consumers and spoke about the economic benefits to local economies of a modest shift in consumer behavior. He cited an example from the Pioneer Valley that increased foot traffic thirty to forty percent.**

**Doug Hammond concluded by encouraging the stakeholders to form a Local First campaign and to work together to achieve the potential economic benefits of a successful effort.**

**Lt. Governor Roberts introduced Noah Fulmer, Executive Director of Farm Fresh RI.**

**Noah Fulmer spoke about the disconnect that existed between farmers, consumers and the marketplace before Farm Fresh RI was formed five years ago.**

**Noah Fulmer described how Farm Fresh RI has linked local farmers to local consumers and businesses. The results have been strong growth in the number of farmer's markets around the state and a dramatic increase in website traffic for both Farm Fresh and the individual farms ([www.farmfreshri.org](http://www.farmfreshri.org)).**

**Noah Fulmer demonstrated how Farm Fresh RI's website is used by producers, consumers and businesses to market and connect buyers and sellers.**

**Lt. Governor Roberts and the panelists answered several questions about Buy Local RI.**

**Lt. Governor Roberts adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.**