



**Small Business Advocacy Council
Tuesday, February 7, 2012
8:30 – 10:00AM**

**RI Economic Development Corporation
Narragansett Conference Room
315 Iron Horse Way
Providence, RI**

MEETING MINUTES

Attendance

Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth H. Roberts
Secretary of State Ralph A. Mollis
Keith Stokes
Mark Hayward
Ray Fogarty
Bud Violet
Leslie Taito
Phil Papoojian
Carmen Diaz-Justino
Sue Chomka
Lauren Slocum
Steve Lombardi
Robert Boisselle
David Lucier
Gary Ezovski
Robert Catanzaro
Miriam Ross
Mark Deion
Maureen Ewing
Bill Parsons
Doris De Los Santos
Adriana Dawson
John Gregory
Sherri Carrera
Nora Eshkhanian
Kelly Carello

Maria Tocco
Vlad Ibarra

Comments / Approval of Minutes

Chair Roberts discussed her meeting with National Grid representatives to try to address several issues brought up by members about unreliable timelines. She met with John Isberg, Director of Community and Customer Management and Tracy Bolduc, Customer Fulfillment Supervisor. The National Grid representatives will address the council at the May meeting.

Chair Roberts also met with Department of Labor and Training Director Charles J. Fogarty, Deputy Director Lisa D'Agostino and John Gregory President of the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce to discuss work development issues including the creation of the Resources and Retention workgroup.

Chair Roberts made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. The motion was seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Subcommittee Updates: Regulations

Regulations Co-Chair Leslie Taito discussed the collaboration between the Office of Regulatory Reform (ORR) and the SBA Summit Regulations Chairs Gary Ezovski and Ron Caniglia. The three partners testified before the Joint Committee on Economic Development on Wednesday, January 25, 2012. Ms. Taito will continue her outreach efforts including community forums with cities and towns about the permitting process. Ms. Taito discussed approximately 25 regulations that have been repealed since she was appointed at ORR. She also discussed the process of providing guidance or a bulletin that will help establish continuity. Lastly, she will continue looking for areas of improvement to get to a clear, predictable and reliable system.

Regulations Co-Chair Gary Ezovski highlighted some of the legislative bills that have been introduced in the General Assembly to ease the regulatory burden on small businesses. He pointed to the introduction of the Construction Permit Process Bill which aims at making an electronic system of uniform forms and procedures. He also discussed the Physical Alteration Process Bill that aims at cutting the time frame from ninety days to thirty days.

Subcommittee Updates: Legislation

Legislative Co-chair Mark Hayward discussed key legislative pieces that were brought forward by members. He discussed the SBA Loan Guarantee Fee Tax and the need to increase the representation of small business on boards and commissions to at least 25 percent. Mr. Hayward also discussed the Construction and Permit Process (previously H 7589) and Electronic Permitting Statewide. The members will re-introduce the Biweekly Pay Legislation for the 14th year. There will also be guidance and added items after the SBA Breakfast at the end of the month. Lastly, he mentioned Senator Miller's proposed legislation that would create parity with Connecticut and Massachusetts to bring our Corporate Tax rate below our current nine percent.

Subcommittee Updates: Resources and Retention

Chair Roberts discussed the need for the subcommittee to provide existing resources to small businesses. She was pleased that during the budget process roughly \$2M was shifted into the Department of Labor and Training-Workforce Investment Board to enhance current programs.

Mr. Gregory highlighted the issues around needed flexibility from the State with filing requirements because otherwise small business owners have to wait for the cycle to end to reapply.

RI Quick Start Update

Secretary of State Ralph Mollis

Secretary of State Mollis provided a brief overview of the newly established Quick Start Program. This online master application will enable entrepreneurs to enter their contact and business information only once. The data collected may be used to complete over three hundred forms that state agencies require. This process will be crucial with the State to shortening, consolidating and eliminating of forms. The Secretary agreed to provide a presentation at the May meeting.

Economic Development Plan

EDC Director Keith Stokes

Director Stokes discussed the RIEDC Board's comprehensive approach with key areas of economic development including Regulatory Reform so that the system becomes clear, predictable and reliable by performance base testing and Ombudsman support. The Board's subcommittees on Access to Capital will identify the best ways to help existing Rhode Island companies or businesses looking to relocate to the state succeed and create quality jobs. The Urban Capital programs under the leadership of Armeather Gibbs will develop comprehensive long and short-range strategies including increasing access to urban small business financing and technical assistance. Better coordination of government services, support community-initiated, mixed-use redevelopment, encourage private investment, and position urban communities as attractive places to live, work and visit. Lastly, he discussed accelerating Infrastructure Hubs including the Transportation Hub in Warwick, the Knowledge District and the implementation of a marketing plan to bring more freight services to Quonset Point by aligning businesses that are looking to grow.

Next Steps

Chair Roberts discussed the next steps for the sub-committees including legislative monitoring and tracking. There will be a meeting with the Department of Administration in regards to access to contracts for small business and the different processes involved. Lastly, Chair Roberts encouraged members to participate in the Healthcare Tax Credit with up to 30 percent credit.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.