



Rhode Island  
Economic Development Corporation

**Small Business Advocacy Council**  
**Tuesday, May 1, 2012**  
**8:30 – 10:00AM**

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

**MEETING MINUTES**

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**Attendance**

Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth H. Roberts  
Secretary of State Ralph A. Mollis  
Keith Stokes  
Senator Joshua Miller  
Leslie Taito  
Gary Ezovski  
Miriam Ross  
Cap Willey  
Mark Deion  
John Gregory  
Ed Ladouceur  
Carmen Diaz-Jusino  
Sherri Carrera  
Armeather Gibbs  
Janet Raymond  
Don Nokes  
Ed Mazze  
Stephen Boyle  
Lorraine Hynes  
Lisa Hill  
Brian Schuster  
John Isberg  
Jerri Moon Cantone  
William Vernon  
Terrance Martiesian  
Claudia Cardozo

Victor Barros  
Bill Parsons  
Maureen Ewing  
Claudia X Cornejo  
Doris De Los Santos  
Jr Neville Songwe  
Robert Kalaskowski  
Maria Tocco  
Vlad Ibarra

## **Opening Remarks**

*Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts*

Chair Roberts opened the meeting highlighting the accomplishments of three SBAC members receiving awards from the Small Business Administration. These included Miriam Ross, who received the Women in Business Champion of the Year (New England), Claudia Cornejo from the Office of the Secretary of the State received the Rhode Island Minority Small Business Champion and Lauren Slocum, President of the Central Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, who received the Rhode Island Home-Based Business Champion of the Year.

Chair Roberts briefly discussed her testimony before the Senate Corporations Committee on Senate Bill 2355 introduced by Senator Erin P. Lynch. The bill aims at eliminating duplicate and out-dated state business regulations and bringing uniformity to the Act. Chair Roberts mentioned how encouraged she was with all the different regulatory reform pieces before the General Assembly and looked forward to the Legislative Sub-Committee update.

## **Sub-Committee updates:**

### **Legislation** - Co-Chair Sen. Miller / Mark Hayward

Senator Joshua Miller provided a brief overview of the legislative activities and the bills that were testified upon and/or those for which were provided written testimony. As alluded to earlier, Chair Roberts testified before the Senate Committee on Corporations on Bill 2355 introduced by Senator P. Lynch as a continuation of the 2010 Regulatory Fairness Act. The bill aims at eliminating duplicate and out-dated state business regulations and bringing uniformity to the Act. A letter of support was provided to the clerk for Senate Bill 2289 which aims to speed up construction projects by mandating that a lack of a “physical alteration permit” necessary to cut into curbs and access state highways will not be cause for a building official to delay examination of a building permit application. Also, letters of support were provided for Senate Bills 2342 and 2375 Introduced by Senators William A. Walaska and Erin P. Lynch, respectively. The bills would allow employers in any industry to petition the Department of Labor and Training for permission to pay their employees less frequently than weekly, provided the employer has satisfied statutory requirements.

Lastly, a letter of support was provided for House Bill 7676 introduced by Representative Deborah Ruggiero that would allow small businesses to claim a tax credit for amounts paid to the U.S. Small Business Administration as guaranty fee when offering SBA guarantee financing. Chair Roberts urged members to push for these issues with their Representatives and Senators.

## **Regulations - Co-Chairs Leslie Taito and Gary Ezovski**

Co-Chair Taito discussed some of her outreach including their meeting with the Rhode Island Builders Association to address some of their problems with state or municipal agencies, councils or boards, and the regulatory process.

One immediate goal is a streamlined, statewide permitting system that clears up those permitting and regulatory logjams for contractors and other small businesses. Moreover, through the RI Ready Program, the RIEDC will work with cities and towns, state agencies, utility companies and public and private partners to develop consistent standards for the availability and development of potential commercial and industrial sites. As a result of this outreach, Ms. Taito met with John Isberg from National Grid and stated she anticipates several follow up meetings. Lt. Governor Roberts commented that the National Grid presentation for today's meeting came as a result of the Regulations Subcommittee Workgroup concerns.

Co-Chair Ezovski was hopeful that the Bi-Weekly legislation would get some track this legislative session as it has been introduced unsuccessfully for the past decade. Also, Mr. Ezovski, mentioned that the Small Business Administration (SBA) chairs would have a follow up meeting at the end of the month.

## **Resources & Retention-Co-Chair John Gregory**

Mr. Gregory discussed the creation of the subcommittee as members expressed a need to raise awareness regarding the available resources that may be of use to them. The subcommittee is an effort to provide information about such resources to the members, and partners in the larger context of discussing job creation and retention.

The sub-committee met to try to collect and consolidate resource, there is a valuable collection of resources housed at the RIEDC under their previous program "Every Company Counts." The challenge going forward will be to take those resources and make them accessible to the public in an easy friendly manner.

## **RI Quick Start Presentation**

*SOS Ralph Mollis / Tom Viall*

Secretary of State Ralph Mollis stated that his priority," Is to make it easier to do business in RI". The Quick Start initiative is an on-line master application that will enable entrepreneurs to enter their contact and business information just once regardless of how many forms they are required to submit to state agencies in order to start a business. He stated that this may be thought of as a comprehensive library of business forms.

Mr. Viall, illustrated on the screen how to navigate the website, the functionality and some of features including being Iphone and Android friendly. The program allows the entrepreneur to populate the more than 300 forms that state agencies can require. Mr. Viall reiterated that their main emphasis is to eliminate or consolidate forms.

Cap Willie inquired as to how are the cities and towns involved in the process? Mr. Viall responded that the current phase is engaging state agencies and the SOS office and the Lt. Governor's office will reach out to agencies if needed.

**2012 Urban Main Street Corridor Program**      *EDC Director Keith Stokes / Armeather Gibbs*

Director Stokes introduced Armeather Gibbs, Managing Director of Urban Finance & Business Development to provide a presentation on the Main Street Corridor Program.

Ms. Gibbs explained how the RI EDC, along with the Governor's office and other state agencies, are working to establish a community-driven demonstration program in selected "*Main Street Corridor Districts*" within Rhode Island's most distressed urban municipalities (Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls, Woonsocket and West Warwick). The program aims to build public/private partnerships, support and advance locally-initiated growth, improve local business support services, adapt underproductive properties, connect with untapped resources, and maintain district authenticity while focusing on mixed-use sites.

Once identified, staff will be assigned to specific "Main Street" districts by securing office space and helping to develop partnerships with municipal officials and stakeholder representatives to align services, target resources and identify local district "champions" and work teams. RI EDC will coordinate with Technical Assistance partners (SBDC, SCORE, CWE, etc.) to assist business owners to determine technical assistance needs and service delivery gaps that will allow the technical assistance partners to tailor their programs to meet the needs of the business community within the Main Street Corridor Districts. A revolving loan Urban Business Growth Fund will also be created to provide more flexible capital funding for small businesses located in the districts. The RI EDC will promote the loan fund and work toward creating new partnerships with local financial institutions to enhance financial support opportunities. Finally, the RI EDC and the Governor's office will explore legislative proposals for a rehab tax credit that applies to new construction on existing manufacturing facilities and for a modified "urban core" enterprise zone program that will provide "live/work" tax credits for jobs generated at certain salary levels within the corridors.

For additional questions about the presentation please contact Ms. Gibbs directly at [agibbs@riedc.com](mailto:agibbs@riedc.com) and/or at 401.278.9100.

**Dept of Administration - Div of Purchasing**

*Lorraine A. Hynes*

Ms. Hynes explained that the Division of Purchasing main priority was to streamline the procurement process to provide more opportunities to vendors.

Ms. Hynes works to evaluate the purchasing process and seek assistance from the business community to ensure that they have input from the users of the purchasing system to enhance the procurement survey. For example, the Division of Purchasing identified services that could be purchased on bulk and vendors have the option to buy large quantities of that product. If two or three vendors come together (printing, janitorial and copies for example) it allows more vendors to participate in the Master Price Agreement (MPA). Ms. Hynes explained that this sort of change will allow small vendors to bid for services on a larger scale.

The Lt. Governor and Purchasing are having discussions to try to create statewide seminars on how to respond to bidding on RFP's.

**National Grid**

*Brian Schuster & John Isberg*

Brian Schuster Director of National Grid's Customer Fulfillment Team and John Isberg, Director of Community and Customer Management provided an overview of the company's electric service fulfillment process.

The presentation highlighted the improvements and changes National Grid has made as appropriate in their process focusing on the business segment while also addressing metrics and satisfaction results. For example, they discussed at length how customer fulfillment representatives oversee request from residential service connections to multi-million dollar commercial developments and the different complexity of those endeavors. Lastly, National Grid is working towards streamlining small business requests for gas and electric services. Ed Ladoceur from the RI Builders Association wanted to follow up with Brian and perhaps provide a featured column on the RIBA newsletter to answer industry questions.

**Next steps**

*Lt. Governor Roberts*

The next steps will revolve around the subcommittees holding meetings throughout the summer and reporting back to the full group in September.

**Announcements/New Business/Adjourn**

None. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 am