

***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2016
MEETING MINUTES***

A meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee was held at the office of the Department of Planning and Development, 444 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island, in the 1st Floor Conference Room on January 27, 2016. The Board of Directors meeting was called to order at 12:05 P.M, with Mayor Jorge Elorza, Chairman, presiding. Roll call of the members and legal counsel was conducted. A quorum was present.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Members in attendance included Mayor Jorge Elorza, Chairman, Brett Smiley, Chief Operating Officer, City of Providence, Daniel Baudouin, Allyson Cote, Adriana Dawson, Sussy DeLeon, Mark Feinstein, Amahl Harik, Shomari Husband, and Councilwoman Sabina Matos.

MEMBERS ABSENT

Members not in attendance were Kas DeCarvalho, Esq., Stephen DelSesto, Esq., Juana Horton, Dr. Russell Ricci, and William Tracey.

STAFF MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Staff members in attendance included Donald Gralnek, Executive Director, Providence Economic Development Partnership (PEDP); Kathy Cosentino, Arthur Speaks, and Gail McGowan.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Others in attendance were Kathryn Sabatini, Assistant City Solicitor, City of Providence Law Department and Economic Development Advisory Committee legal counsel; Tony Simon, Chief of Staff, City of Providence; Mark Huang, Director of Economic Development, City of Providence; Bonnie Nickerson, Director, City of Providence Department of Planning and Development; Robert Azar, Deputy Director, City of Providence, Department of Planning and Development; Sally Brito, Director of Fiscal Operations, City of Providence Department of Planning and Development; Brian Hull, Director of the Division of Community Development, City of Providence Department of Planning and Development; Barry Sullivan, Director of Real Estate, City of Providence Department of Planning and Development; Maryellen Goodwin, City of Providence, Department of Planning and Development; Thomas Hoagland, Acting Assistant Director and PBLF contract underwriter; Andrew Augustus, Communications Department, City of Providence; Betsy Santarlaschi; Ann Gralnek; Blaine Carroll, Delta Dental; John Bento, Department of Economic Development; Kanika Gandhi, Department of Economic Development; Rich Overmoyer, Fourth Economy; Peter McNally, I-95 Development District Commission; Dan Jennings, Commerce RI; Council President Luis A. Aponte, Providence City Council; Dan McGowan, WPRI; and Wade Gibson, Chief of Staff, Executive Office of Commerce.

Mayor Elorza thanked everyone for their time and commitment to the city. Now that we have the new Economic Development Advisory Committee going, the city, himself and the entire team now have the opportunity to tap into your wealth of experience coming from a number of different perspectives to guide all economic development plans as a city as a whole. Today we will go through some reports and some of the new structures that we are working with. Mayor Elorza really wants to stress that a lot of time has gone into producing the reports we are going to go over today. The challenge that we have is taking all of those reports and all of those ideas and turning them into very actionable steps and creating structures and administrative processes so we can take advantage of those resources and strategic strengths that we have as a city. Mayor Elorza looks forward to hearing from every one of you and hearing your suggestions and hearing your thoughts on how we as an administration and we as a city can create those administrative processes, provide those financial supports and also the leadership in this area to make a reality of the recommendations we will go over in the reports.

Mayor Elorza continued stating that economic development means a lot of different things to a lot of different people, but there are at least three (3) prongs to this. The first prong is real estate development and this should be a very busy season for this within the city. This will raise people's spirits to see, but economic development is much more than that. The second prong is workforce development and making sure that our graduates and trainees have the skills to compete in a 21st century economy. He looks forward to hearing your thoughts and we will share some exciting ideas we are developing regarding how to recruit world class businesses and show them efforts we are making with workforce development and so we can tie workforce development efforts into every part of our community including disadvantaged neighborhoods. The third prong is pure economic development. We are a former industrial city. Twenty to thirty years ago you could get a job in the textile and jewelry mills. Those jobs are gone and are not coming back. So how do we re-invent and re-create our economy? What is the economy of the future? Mark Huang and his team have been doing a lot of work in this area. We have some core strategic strengths as a city from arts, culture and design to blue economy to the broad topic of aging to the area of food. We want to make sure that we put a stake in the ground and let the world know that if people want to start a company or grow an company, Providence is where they want to be in those areas because we are going to support them in a number of different ways. That is the economic development piece. What is the economy of the future, how do we make that real and how do we support that with real estate development and workforce development as well.

Mayor Elorza thanked the members again for being here and looks forward to the presentations and conversation. This is the beginning of something very important and very special for our city and he is very grateful to have you all here with your knowledge basis.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Donald Gralnek provided a brief overview of today's agenda and changes to the agenda order. Thomas Hoagland then provided a report on the Providence Business Loan Fund (PBLF) and provided the status of the recent loan approvals.

At 12:15 PM Council President Luis A. Aponte arrived at the meeting.

At 12:17 P.M. Councilwoman Sabina Matos arrived at the meeting.

DIRECTORS REPORTS

Bonnie Nickerson, Director of the City of Providence Department of Planning and Development and followed by Brian Hull, Director of the Division of Community Development, City of Providence, Department of Planning and Development provided an overview of their department and division, its current projects, programs and accomplishments and the key roles played in economic development and current economic development initiatives.

NEW BUSINESS

The first item of New Business entertained by the Economic Development Advisory Committee was the Fourth Economy Economic Cluster Strategy Report. Rich Overmoyer, President and CEO of Fourth Economy introduced himself, congratulated the committee and proceeded to provide an overview of the recommendations in the report.

The next item of New Business was the HR & A Advisors, Inc. I-195 / The Providence Innovation and Design District report. Peter McNally, Executive Director of the I-195 Development District Commission presented the report and its nine (9) recommendations.

Mayor Elorza noted that with respect for the meeting time, we would go back to the Directors Reports and then open up the meeting to questions and discussion.

DIRECTORS REPORTS

Mark Huang, Director of Economic Development, City of Providence introduced himself and distributed a handout to the members. Mr. Huang discussed food being a new area of growth and the city's core competencies. The Port of Providence was also briefly discussed regarding refrigerated warehousing. We will see if the market analysis supports importing directly from Central America. Mr. Huang is also working closely with the state.

Mayor Elorza thanked everyone for their reports and presentations and asked Mr. Huang to speak to the other areas that we are building. Mr. Huang briefly reviewed the areas of health and wellness and aging, the blue economy, and arts and design.

The meeting was then opened up to discussion and questions.

At 1:22 P.M. Mayor Elorza stated that he had to leave the meeting and thanked the presenters. Mayor Elorza echoed the thoughts of Council President Aponte, Councilwoman Matos, and Mr. Hull and stated that he heard the Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez speak recently who put it so well. We all want a rising tide, but a rising tide has to lift all boats, not just yachts. So the question is how do we make sure a rising tide reaches out into all of our neighborhoods.

The meeting discussion then continued. Where we go from here was questioned. It was also questioned if the committee was not bound by the same open meetings rules and whether it could break into sub-groups. Kathryn Sabatini, Assistant Solicitor responded that the committee is subject to the Open Meetings Act and that even committees that are advisory are subject to the Act. Attorney Sabatini stated that the committee can create smaller committees, post those meetings and meet publicly.

Mr. Gralnek responded that the sub-group would meet in February and report back to the committee in March. Mr. Gralnek also noted that the meetings are open and invited the City Council to participate whenever possible.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 P.M.

Approved: March 15, 2016