

***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE***  
***TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2016***  
***DRAFT 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 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room on March 15, 2016. The Board of Directors meeting was called to order at 12:14 P.M, with Brett Smiley, presiding. Roll call of the members and legal counsel was conducted. A quorum was present.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Members in attendance included Brett Smiley, Chief Operating Officer, City of Providence, Daniel Baudouin, Allyson Cote, Kas DeCarvalho, Esq., Stephen DelSesto, Esq., Mark Feinstein, Amahl Harik, Councilwoman Sabina Matos, and William Tracey.

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Members not in attendance were John (Jack) Bentz, Adriana Dawson, Sussy DeLeon, Juana Horton, Shomari Husband, and Dr. Russell Ricci.

**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 Megan DiSanto, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor, City of Providence Law Department and Economic Development Advisory Committee legal counsel; Mark Huang, Director of Economic Development, City of Providence; Bonnie Nickerson, Director, 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; and Thomas Hoagland, Director and PBLF contract underwriter.

**MEETING MINUTES**

The minutes of the January 27, 2016 Economic Development Advisory Committee were submitted for review and approval. Upon a motion made by Mark Feinstein and seconded by Daniel Baudouin, it was voted to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2016 Economic Development Advisory Committee meeting. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

**REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN**

Brett Smiley expressed his and Mayor Elorza's gratitude for the good and substantive meeting two months ago and noted that the sub-committee has met in the time in between for which Donald Gralnek has circulated notes from the meeting. We remain confident and optimistic that this is the right direction to head in. Mr. Smiley recognized the hard work that gets done on a daily basis and acknowledged the Economic Development Director, Purchasing Director, Planning Director, Community Development Director, Workforce Development Director and the Art, Culture and Tourism Director who are in the audience and all of whom together are a great team to move the city forward. If the committee has issues or direction to explore, Mr. Smiley hopes it will suggest them and bring them forward. Notes from fellow colleagues and committee members Russell Ricci and Allyson Cote were distributed to the committee. Mr. Smiley really appreciates how much hard work and thought that everyone is putting into this. It is still a work in progress and we will continue to move forward as we evolve the projects that we want to undertake. Mr. Smiley thanked the committee on behalf of the mayor. Mr. Smiley added that Mayor Elorza will be at the next meeting of this group and has been following all that has taken place as well as the notes received by the members. This is a really important way to provide direct feedback to the administration on things we are working on.

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Donald Gralnek reported to the committee that the working group met in February regarding what the committee discussed in January, out of which will come some structure for us. We will be having some discussion of the members' thoughts at today's meeting. Mr. Gralnek stated that Thomas Hoagland would provide an update regarding the PBLF. Mr. Hoagland provided a brief update regarding current and recent PBLF activity.

At 12:18 P.M. Councilwoman Matos arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Gralnek proceeded by stating that the sub-committee had requested that we invite some of the department directors to provide brief reports to the committee and proceeded to the Directors reports on today's agenda.

## DIRECTORS REPORTS

Reports were given by Stephanie Fortunato, Interim Director of Art, Culture and Tourism followed by Jim Glover, Interim Administrator, Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston and Tolulope Olasanoye, Director of Purchasing for the City of Providence. Each provided brief overviews of their department and its current functions, resources, services and/or programs. Questions raised by the committee were also answered. All of the directors were thanked for their reports.

The next report provided to the committee was that of Mark Huang, Director of Economic Development. Mr. Huang stated that the city applied for the Smart City grant but did not get it and also applied for a TIGER Grant that it did get. We are looking at embracing new technologies and new efficiencies, which will allow us to provide services better. Mr. Huang noted that there are many digital tools available, noting how powerful digital technology is, which he briefly discussed. It was also noted that a lot of research is going into smart cities. Mr. Huang discussed additional grant writing and the development of the American Tourister site as an industrial park with the food industry as a targeted tenant. An additional grant will be submitted to the EDA/Department of Commerce looking for federal assistance for this project. The third initiative discussed by Mr. Huang was the development of the Knowledge Economy around the 195 land, which furthers one of Mayor Elorza's target sectors, that of aging. The Choice Neighborhood grant was questioned, to which it was responded that we will get an update from Bonnie Nickerson. The website re-design was questioned and briefly discussed.

Reports were not provided this month by Bonnie Nickerson, Director of the City of Providence Department of Planning and Development and Brian Hull, Director of the Division of Community Development, City of Providence, Department of Planning and Development. Due to a scheduling conflict, Ms. Nickerson and Mr. Hull had to leave the meeting prior to their reports being able to be provided.

## NEW BUSINESS

The first item of New Business entertained by the Economic Development Advisory Committee was the discussion of the implementation strategy of the City of Providence regarding the three (3) recent economic development reports. Mr. Gralnek noted that the comments that have been received by the members were distributed to the committee. Mr. Gralnek proceeded to briefly review the comments of Dr. Ricci and of Ms. Cote. Ms. Cote briefly addressed the committee and clarified points raised in her comments.

It was expressed that the committee should pick one (1) to three (3) things from the studies and get something done. The question was raised whether the discussion of having one person on staff that works with businesses was fulfilled was briefly discussed, as well as the issue of language relative to this staffing role.

At 1:23 P.M. Stephen DelSesto, Esq. and Councilwoman Sabina Matos left the meeting.

It was expressed that we need to make strides in the educational system in order for people to want to live and work here. The issue of permitting and improving its process was raised and discussed. Mr. Smiley stated that when known issues arise, to share that information with him or the directors present. Mr. Smiley stressed that it is important to share the details of any issues as it is hard to solve a problem without any details, which are critical in order to both solve any problems and improve the system. It was stated that Mayor Elorza is doing monthly roundtable sector meetings. It was expressed that was a tremendous idea but that it is subject to self selection and the suggestion was made for a survey to be conducted for feedback to be provided.

Mr. Smiley concluded by informing the committee that by next month's meeting he will have the results of the ten (10) year fiscal plan. Mayor Elorza will publicly announce the results in April. We will have a discussion of those recommendations around actions to be taken at the next meeting. The committee's feedback regarding how to prioritize those recommendations is critical. The date of the next meeting was questioned. The committee is scheduled to meet in May but was questioned whether the committee would want to meet in April. It was decided that the committee would meet in April and the meeting date of April 21, 2016 was chosen.

Mr. Gralnek requested that the committee send each of their top three (3) economic development priorities to him or Ms. Cosentino.

Mr. Smiley added that he will send the National Resource Network (NRN) plan report to the committee.

A motion to adjourn was then made by Kas DeCarvalho, Esq. and seconded by Daniel Baudouin and the meeting was adjourned at 1:35 P.M.