

# **RHODE ISLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

## **MEETING OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS** **TOURISM SUBCOMMITTEE**

### **PUBLIC SESSION**

**APRIL 27, 2011**

The Tourism Subcommittee of the Board of Directors of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (the "Corporation") met on Thursday, April 27, 2011, in Public Session, beginning at 11:30 a.m., at the offices of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation located at 315 Iron Horse Way, Providence, Rhode Island, pursuant to notice of the meeting to all subcommittee members, and public notice of the meeting, a copy of which is attached hereto, as required by the By-Laws of the Corporation and applicable Rhode Island law.

The following subcommittee members were present and participated throughout the meeting: Subcommittee Chairman Mr. Daniel Sullivan, Ms. Martha Sheridan, Mr. Dale Venturini, Executive Director Keith Stokes, Mr. Mark Brodeur, Ms. Judy Chong, and Ms. Jayne Panarello.

The meeting was called to order at 11:50 a.m. The members of the subcommittee approved the April 21, 2011 meeting minutes. The TAC Executive Order working draft was distributed to the subcommittee and it was noted that the language was still being refined. The plan was to have the order finalized to make an announcement at the annual RI Tourism Unity Luncheon on May 11, 2011. Various portions of the draft executive order were reviewed by the subcommittee. Ms. Sheridan discussed the composition of the subcommittee and recommended bringing high level individuals on to the committee such as from COX Communications, Hasbro, National Grid and Lifespan. The subcommittee discussed the number of committee members. Mr. Sullivan emphasized the importance of reporting on the use of funds and what the funds cannot be used for. It was noted that the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the South County Tourism Council already send expenditure reports to finance committees and the Governor's office.

The members of the subcommittee reviewed a handout regarding hotel tax distribution and discussed adjustments to reflect the 1% to cities and towns. Mr. Sullivan suggested a recommendation be made to present to the TAC for an across the board formula. Ms. Sheridan further suggested strategically asking all regions to invest in a structural program. Mr. Venturini suggested getting the TAC established in order to create credibility, and that the first full meeting of the TAC should be educational. The subcommittee discussed whether the tax distribution discussion should be tabled until adjustments are made. Mr. Stokes noted that the sales tax decrease is very real. Mr. Sullivan discussed the issuance of press releases containing success story interviews with Ms. Sheridan or Mr. Venturini. He further noted the need to get tourism back on

the radar in order for the legislature to respond. Mr. Stokes suggested that the subcommittee work with Providence Business News and/or John Palumbo to get the stories out. Ms. Sheridan suggested the Providence Journal and a success story about the basketball tournament held last year in Providence. Mr. Venturini additionally noted that in February 2011, 600 employees were added to the industry, and that another good story could highlight how the industry gives people a chance. Ms. Chong suggested continuous e-mails to the General Assembly sharing stories and good news with them to keep tourism on the forefront. It was noted that a conference call was scheduled with consultants was deferred to a future meeting.

The members of the subcommittee discussed budget recommendations, including cottage taxes. Ms. Stokes commented that it may not be a good year for new taxes and that the TAC should be asked for recommendations. He further stated that in putting together the TAC, suggestions for professionals to serve on the TAC should be send to Mr. Brodeur.

There being no further business in Public Session, the meeting was adjourned at 12:45 a.m.

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David M. Gilden, Secretary