

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes

February 14, 2007 at 4:00 P.M.

City of Fort Lauderdale

100 North Andrews Avenue

8th Floor Conference Room

<u>Board Members</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>2007 Cumulative</u>	
		<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Robert Boyd	P	2	0
Mark Budwig, Chair	P	2	0
Pat DuMont	P	2	0
Kristina Hebert	P	2	0
Cort Neimark	P	2	0
Ralph Riehl	P	2	0
Adam Sanders	A	1	1
Tim Schiavone	P	2	0
Gerri Washington	P	2	0
Gwen Watson, Vice Chair	P	2	0

Staff

Patricia Smith, Secretary III

Ron Hicks, Director of Economic Development

Travis Woods, Recording Secretary

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Budwig called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Board members introduced themselves. Also present were guests: Ramola Motwani and Diana Alarcon.

II. Approval of January 2007 Minutes

Motion made by Ms. DuMont, seconded by Ms. Washington to approve the minutes of the January 2007 meeting. In a voice vote, the minutes were unanimously approved.

III. Directors Report

Chair Budwig stated that Mr. Hicks' report would be passed over in lieu of the discussion with guests Ramola Motwani and Diana Alarcon.

IV. Beach Activities and City Beautification

Chair Budwig introduced Ramola Motwani, hotel owner, engineer, and member of the Beach Council. She has been a business owner on the beach for 20 years, and has been active in the development along the beach. Ms. Motwani commented on attendance, at a promotional forum for the Ft. Lauderdale Beach,

brought the knowledge that the Beach was passed over as a tourist destination because there was neither cafes nor outdoor entertainment. That meeting started the vision for Beach development and the formation of the Beach Council. Ms. Motwani stated the time is critical for such beach development; the beach is an economic engine for the City and there needs to be a joint effort between public and private entities to ensure that the Beach meets expectations for the commercial market to succeed. Ms. Motwani emphasized that the Board needed to be aware of what is being accomplished on various boards and councils. Ms. Motwani's group has worked to influence the City to install holiday lights, and is now interested in helping to plan events and festivities. She stated the lights are just the beginning. She expressed her gratitude to Mr. Hicks for his assistance to the Beach Council.

Mr. Hicks stated that the reason the Beach has holiday lights is due to Ms. Motwani as they did not have the proper infrastructure in place and had to install marine grade transformers. He pointed out that Ms. Motwani had gotten support from the private sector and, in addition, put her own money on the table to make the project happen.

Ms. Motwani mentioned that after hurricane Wilma, things were difficult; reminding everyone that they need to be involved, join hands, and come together to make a difference for a common cause. It is Ms. Motwani's hope to see local people coming to enjoy their beach, attending events, festivals, and family functions.

Mr. Budwig inquired of Ms. Motwani if she would like to see a street event in addition to the lights and she replied that she would.

Mr. Hicks stated that he and Ms. Motwani have had discussions about having events on the beach similar to Las Olas with holiday lights, vendors, and a carnival-like atmosphere. Ms. Motwani said that there used to be movies on South Beach; it was a good family event and well attended. Mr. Hicks added that he would suggest utilizing the Trolley for such events. He expressed surprise and sadness at the lack of organization for the Super Bowl festivities this year. He stressed that preparations for the 2010 Super Bowl should begin as soon as possible.

Ms. DuMont questioned whether there was a group already in place to make such an event as these a reality for the Beach area. If there is such a group what do they do. Has an application been submitted requesting BCIP funds. What happened to the tax district.

Mr. Hicks replied that the Beach Council has an active group of members and

Ms. Motwani chairs the Council. The idea here is to get other groups and people involved. This Board can recommend events, use community connections to help facilitate the event, hire a director, and expand the program. An increase in dues would cover the cost of hiring a director and it would be up to the business owners to decide if they wanted to do more than that.

Ms. DuMont explained that BCIP could not do an event, but they could deal with transformers and other issues or beautification that would certainly be in their realm. Mr. Hicks agreed, asserting that BCIP would approve of the transformers, as they have done so in the past. Ms. DuMont stated that there are infrastructure issues and in the long term there is a wish list for things to happen. A liaison is needed to work with the various groups interested in helping.

Ms. Motwani commented that the long term plan would be for the Board to advise the Commission, and to keep them informed about the economic needs of the community. Ms. DuMont inquired as to how the communication and information would be shared with partners, hotels, and other boards. Ms. Motwani stated that the Chamber members would get information from the Chamber meetings, CBB conventions or other hospitality sources. The business community would be sharing information and working together through various boards.

Mr. Schiavone stressed that the Beach Council reaches a diverse group and there is ample communication between individuals, businesses, and the Council but there is always room for improvement. Mr. Schiavone asked Ms. Motwani what she felt was the biggest hurdle facing the City for developing the beach vision. Mr. Schiavone also stated how upset he was about the Super Bowl coverage this year. Preparations for 2010 need to begin now; it will be a tremendous opportunity; it should be covered with cameras, concerts, events, and festivities. Ms. DuMont added that a concerned group should be formed to start on planning for the next Super Bowl. When plans are set, ideas and groups formed, proposals can go to the City and ask for their help.

Mr. Schiavone inquired as to what is the biggest hurdle facing the beach development; what is it that is slowing this process down, and questioned if it is that there's no master plan for beach. Ms. Motwani answered that the biggest slowdowns are the planning process, the zoning, and slow project approval.

Mr. Schiavone stated that the City is a work in progress, there is a sense of a new order in place now, but the need to get organized, coordinated and have a City vision statement is still present. Ms. DuMont asked what this Board can do to help. Mr. Hicks stated that he would recommend that the Board look at several specific industries in Fort Lauderdale, not just in the hospitality industry, and assist these industries with finding ways to improve and expand. Mr. Hicks pointed out the need to form small committees and visit these industries.

Studying the industry, discovering strengths and weaknesses would arm the Board with information to take to the Commissioners with suggestions of assistance to that industry.

Ms. Motwani stressed that the parking lot at the corner of the beach needs more entrances. Mr. Hicks related that guest, Ms. Alarcon, from the parking department will address this issue later in the meeting and there is a proposal in process to increase the entrances for the South Beach Lot and to install multi-spaced meters.

Ms. Motwani requested an economic impact study for the beach. Ms. DuMont stated that CBB should have all of that information on hand and that enough studies have been performed to warrant and guide proper actions. Mr. Hicks informed the Board that the CBB has a completed tourist profile and software is available that is capable of interpreting tourist profiles into defined city parameters to predict economic impacts of individuals, shows, business growth, and events. Ms. Watson stated there is a master plan for the area of the New River on Las Olas. EDSA has done this along with FAU; these studies received grant funding.

Mr. Neimark stated the problem is not with studies, there is the land institute study and others sitting on the shelf - it is the implementation. There isn't a body for implementation. The beach development/beautification is trickier than that which occurred downtown. The downtown area had the benefit of the DDA and ample money.

Mr. Riehl brought up BID funding, and stated that the actual bid put out two days ago was for cleaning the beach and maintaining it. Mr. Neimark inquired if the board had been created for BID, and if there was a timeframe on when the body politic would be in place. Mr. Hicks replied no. Mr. Neimark inquired if that would be the body though which action would occur and Mr. Hicks answered that BID is set up to enhance and maintain, from there those Board members would determine what more they wanted to do. The BID district encompasses properties that are from west side of A1A to the high water mark. (North and South is Sunrise Boulevard to Holiday Drive), members will discuss what improvements to make. Mr. Neimark remarked that if the proposed enhancements developed positively along that corridor it would expand into other areas naturally, because of the success.

Chair Budwig expressed thanks to Ms. Motwani for her time and initiated a list of people who wish to meet with her in the near future.

V: Special Events Ordinance

Ms. Alarcon introduced herself as the Assistant Parking Service Manager. She was asked to speak about special event ordinances.

Mr. Hicks added that the Board is primarily interested in events related to the Billfish Tournament and their threat to leave Ft. Lauderdale.

Mr. Schiavone and Ms. Dumont inquired how the Billfish Tournament is related to parking.

Ms. Alarcon explained that two and half years ago, the Commissioners created an ordinance on how to charge for parking at events. Most events ask for public parking spaces or reduced rates on metered parking. Studies were done on charges and usage, and a standard for events was created. Basically, events received a 20% discount the first year, 15% the second year, and a 10% discount thereafter on meter rates. All events pay the same fees. The Billfish Tournament, in the past always asked the Commission for a reduction in this parking standard. The Commission would decide on a price less than the standard event rate and Parking Management implemented their decision. This year, the Commission decided that the Billfish Tournament needed to follow the standard event rate. The Billfish tournament was not happy with the change.

Ms. DuMont asked if there are different rates for not-for-profit and Ms. Alarcon stated no. Ms. DuMont expressed surprise and stated there should be a special rate for not-for-profits citing a recent Navy League function as an example.

Mr. Schiavone recommended the Board look closely at the standard of parking fees and advise the Commission on a workable solution. Mr. Hicks inquired what the difference was between what the Billfish paid last year and this year. Ms. Alarcon explained that the difference was \$7,000. Mr. Hicks explained that the City would end up subsidizing not-for-profit organizations by some \$7,000.00 per event. The matter of economic impact must be considered. There are some organized events that have a great impact on the city, and others that do not.

Ms. Alarcon informed the Board that new meters would be installed shortly at the South Beach Lot, which will be multi-spacing, similar to those on Las Olas. Also, work is in progress on a universal debit card that can be used for single or multi-spaced meters and purchase goods/services at participating area merchants.

II. Director's Report

Director Hicks thanked those Board Members that attended the Intracoastal tour and recommended the Board tour other industries in the future. Planned tours would include hotels, those established and those being built, the Ft. Lauderdale

Executive Airport and the Cypress Creek area to the North. Anyone interested in these tours should contact him.

Mr. Hicks recommend a business forum partnering the Chamber of Commerce, the mid town Business District and the City to do a business forum in the Northwest District of Mizelle Center. This would enable the businesses exposure to the SBA and other entities providing resources to area business owners. Ms. Watson asked why this couldn't be done at the Chamber of Commerce office. Mr. Hick's replied that he would like to have the meeting held where the businesses are located. "We need to get the Chamber out of the downtown and out of Las Olas, and onto Sistrunk."

Mr. Hicks briefly asked for recommendations on business recovery centers. Hurricane season will soon be here again and there should be five recovery centers in place for this season. Ms. Watson recommended area restaurants with generators. Mr. Hick's reaffirmed that information should be sent to him regarding generator location.

VI. Old/New Business

Chair Budwig informed the Board that he had checked with the Sheriff's Office at the Airport regarding complaints published in the newspaper about police at the airport. The Sheriff's Office said they are doing integrity checks and defended, the officers, and their work. Ms. DuMont suggested discussing the issue with the CBB since they are concerned about hospitality with people at the airport.

Chair Budwig stated a list of beautification items had been formed but that discussion would be held until the next meeting.

With no further business to discuss, Chair Budwig adjourned the meeting at 5:36 p.m.