

Approved
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD (EDAB)
Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2007 - 4:00 p.m.
City of Fort Lauderdale
100 North Andrews Avenue,
8th Floor Conference Room

		Cumulative Attendance 1/2007 – 12/2007	
Board Members	Attendance	P	A
Mark Budwig, Chair	P	9	0
Gwen Watson, Vice Chair	P	8	1
Cort Neimark	A	5	4
Patricia DuMont	A	5	4
Tim Schiavone	P	6	3
Kristina Hebert	P	6	3
Ralph Riehl	P	9	0
Adam Sanders	P	7	2
Dev Ramesh Motwani	P	5	0
Mark Krom	P	3	1

Staff

Jeff Modarelli, Economic Development Director
Karen Reese, Economic Development Staff
Hilda Testa, ProtoType Inc., Recording Clerk

Guests

Fred Carlson, South Florida Tourism Council

I. Call to Order & Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m. by Chair Budwig.

Chair Budwig remarked that he Board's tour of the War Memorial facility the previous month had been wonderful.

II. Approval of September 12, 2007 Minutes

Motion made by Mr. Riehl, seconded by Ms. Watson, to approve the minutes of the Board's September 2007 meeting. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

III. Director's Report

Mr. Modarelli provided updates on the Board's recent discussions as follows.

Gateway Banner Signs.

Mr. Modarelli explained that City Code dictated a banner sign could only be displayed for a maximum of 14 days. It must be associated with a City-sponsored event, or an event approved by the City Commission. Recently, the City Commission approved going outside of the 14 day limitation for a special event, however, it is specific to an event co-sponsored by the City of Fort Lauderdale. A permanent banner sign for the different gateways would be very difficult. Mr. Modarelli invited the Board's suggestions for creative solutions.

The Board then began discussion regarding I-95 beach signs.

I-95 Beach Signs

Regarding the I-95 signs that would direct visitors to the beach, Mr. Modarelli reported staff had spoken with FDOT, who indicated they would not be willing to do this, because it would require them to do it for all municipalities along I-95. This would not be feasible because of space limitations. Mr. Modarelli did agree to go back to the FDOT to find out the reasoning for signs being placed in certain locations.

Board members noted that there were signs on I-95 indicating routes to Miami's beaches, and wondered why these were permitted. Chair Budwig recommended documenting the signs, so they could cite specific examples for FDOT.

Returning to Gateway banner sign discussion, Chair Budwig suggested preparing a mockup of a welcome banner sign to present to the City Commission. Mr. Modarelli noted that the ordinance is specific as to signage. He advised he spoke to the City Attorney's office in this regard and was advised the "main driver" for banner signs was sponsorship and funding, and even if the banners were permitted by ordinance, there would be a problem with funding because advertising could not be placed on the banners permanently.

Ms. Watson informed the Board that on the Sistrunk corridor, they were installing MLK and Sistrunk Festival banners for a month. Mr. Modarelli reiterated that the banner restrictions were in the City's code.

Mr. Fred Carlson, South Florida Tourism Council, suggested an archway with a sign after the Sunrise Intracoastal bridge. He stated there were "neighborhood gateways" that were cooperative efforts with the City. He felt the Central Beach Alliance, the Central Beach CRA or the South Florida Tourism Council area would qualify as neighborhoods with whom the City could similarly partner for permanent banners. Mr. Modarelli explained that permanent signs had restrictions as well.

Mr. Riehl suggested that Mr. Modarelli draft an ordinance regarding banners welcoming visitors from the airport. He said the Economic Development Board would develop funding for the signs.

Ms. Watson remarked on the powerful, welcoming effect the banners in Detroit provided on her recent visit. She said these had made the visit very memorable. Mr. Motwani stated the Convention and Visitors Bureau could provide funding for signs.

Mr. Schiavone suggested signs welcoming residents of individual states, and/or countries. Mr. Schiavone felt the City lacks the "spirit of the City," and the goodwill, and instead dwells on buildings and money, instead of how it really feels to live in the City.

Chair Budwig recommended the Board create a sign design, identifying locations and funding, which they could present as a package plan to the City Commission.

Mr. Modarelli responded by stating that as the Economic Development Director and Board liaison, he reports to the City Manager, adding that the City Attorney's interpretation of the Code does not always reflect his desires but it is the way the Code is mandated. He felt Chair Budwig's suggestion of coming together with an idea is a good starting point as, if the idea is conceptualized, and to begin the process, they can then take it to the City Attorney's Office to determine its feasibility.

Chair Budwig advised that the CVB may have additional funding ideas.

Mr. Modarelli suggested brainstorming this idea further at the next meeting to see what can be done. Currently, in order to place banners, there is an approval process first to the Parks & Recreation Department, and then to Planning & Zoning. He also reminded the Board that any project would have to take into consideration ongoing maintenance costs.

IV. Old/New Business

Police Department Security on Beach

Mr. Motwani reported that response to a recent mugging near the beach had been very quick and effective. He felt there had been significant improvement recently. Mr. Motwani remarked that the perception of crime was more important than the actual statistics.

Mr. Carlson agreed that perception was important, and said he and Mr. Riehl had been urging community-based policing, but had been told there was insufficient staff to accomplish this.

Motion made by Mr. Riehl that the Board take a position that they wanted community-based policing on the beach. [motion died for lack of a second]

Mr. Modarelli remembered the community-based policing concept being introduced when he had worked at the Police Department, with the goal that this could be integrated into everyday police patrols. Mr. Modarelli believed their Police Department had done this. Mr. Schiavone believed the Police Department was too short-staffed and stressed right now to be more community-based.

Mr. Carlson believed the real problem was Police Officer retention, and noted that the only Police Department in South Florida without a cost of living increase in their pensions was Fort Lauderdale, and he felt this was contributing to the high turnover problem. Mr. Modarelli did not feel these Police Department issues were relevant or appropriate to the Board's discussion.

Sistrunk Corridor Tour

Chair Budwig asked Board members to agree to take the tour in lieu of their December meeting. They would meet at City Hall and use the Sun Trolley for their tour, departing at 3:30 p.m.

Ms. Watson believed the Board was scheduled to review applications for the BCIP and NCIP grants at their December meeting. Mr. Modarelli agreed to confirm this and notify Board members.

Chair Budwig reminded Board members that election of Vice Chair would take place in January.

Mr. Schiavone reminded the Board that the north beach parking area now had a 9 p.m. curfew. He explained that he and other business owners wanted the curfew to no longer apply once the meters were installed. Mr. Schiavone was creating a letter on behalf of his merchant's association to send to the City Commission, requesting the lifting of the curfew.

Mr. Krom asked about business incentives the City offered, and Mr. Modarelli said the City had an ordinance that defined City policy and they had also had been involved in QTIs with the State. He pointed out that there were additional funding sources available, such as through the County or the Broward Alliance. Mr. Modarelli stated the website would soon offer information regarding this.

Ms. Watson announced that Light Up Sistrunk would take place on December 1 in Heritage Park at 5 p.m.

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With no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

[Minutes prepared by J. Opperee, Prototype, Inc.]