

Approved
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD (EDAB)
MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
8TH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2009 – 3:45-5:15 P.M.

1/09 – 12/09

Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Ralph Riehl, Chair	P	8	0
Mark Budwig	A	7	2
Patricia DuMont	A	7	2
Mark Krom, Vice Chair	P	7	1
Sean deVosjoli	P	6	2
Christopher Denison	P	3	1
Miya Burt-Stewart (4:08)	P	4	0
Sheryl Dickey (3:51)	P	3	1
Dev Motwani	P	3	0
Christopher Pollock	P	1	0
Adam Sanders	P	1	0

As of this date, there were 11 appointed members to the Board, which means 6 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

Stephen Scott, Economic Development Director
Karen Reese, Economic Development Representative
Eileen Furedi, Clerk III
Jennifer Picinich, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to City Commission

None at this time.

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Chair Riehl called the meeting to order at 3:45 p.m. Roll was called and it was determined a quorum was present.

II. Approval of August 12, 2009 Minutes

Motion made by Mr. Motwani, seconded by Mr. Denison, to approve the minutes of the August 12, 2009 meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

III. Welcome New Members

Adam Sanders is the Government Affairs Director at the Realtor Association of Greater Fort Lauderdale. He stated this is his first meeting since being reappointed.

Christopher Pollock is a former President of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce. He has been a hotelier in the City since 1973.

Ms. Dickey joined the meeting at this time (3:51 p.m.).

IV. Target Industries

Chair Riehl introduced Bob Swindell, of the Broward Alliance and Target Industries, who gave a presentation to the Board.

Mr. Swindell advised that some recent developments have affected economic development in the City: first, Mr. Scott and Ms. Reese were instrumental in having the City amend its Ordinance regarding an incentive program for companies. While the State offered economic incentives to companies providing 10 or more jobs, the City's similar Ordinance previously required that businesses provide 100 jobs. This put the City at a competitive disadvantage with other municipalities. The Ordinance has now been amended to reflect the State's 10-job minimum, as do other municipalities in Broward County.

He moved on to describe how the Broward Alliance focuses not only on "branding" the community, but plans to roll out a new program, Accelerate Broward, which has previously been presented to the Board. This is a corporate headquarters recruitment strategy for Greater Fort Lauderdale. Part of the initiative was to create a council of CEOs, which is currently led by Nova Southeastern University President Ray Ferrero, who focus solely on marketing the City as a destination for corporate headquarters.

Recently a consultant has informed the Broward Alliance that most of their "brand equity" is in Fort Lauderdale: for example, individuals outside Florida are often not familiar with Broward County, but they are aware of Fort Lauderdale. The Partner Council of the Broward Alliance, a group consisting of economic development officers from Broward County's various municipalities, have agreed that the most effective way to market the area is as "Greater Fort Lauderdale." This effort will begin within the next year, Mr. Swindell stated.

The philosophy, he continued, is to "get the companies to Florida," which he advised is 80% of the battle. When a company comes to the area, each of the various Florida communities has an equal chance of becoming home to that company, and the business then selects its preferred environment.

He explained that headquarters can be seen as a target industry in themselves. They may be any kind of business; all headquarters, however, will require a core component of corporate support services, including marketing, legal, and other considerations necessary to corporate headquarters. Mr. Swindell reported that 75% of the corporate headquarters in Broward County have fewer than 75 employees, which means they are not necessarily “huge operations.”

Mr. Swindell distributed a handout on the State of Florida's Qualified Target Industries (QTI) Program, which must satisfy certain criteria:

- The industry must be wealth-building, which means it exports a product or service and imports profit, which is then circulated within the community;
- It must offer high-skill, high-wage jobs. Mr. Swindell reported the average wage in Broward County in 2007 was \$41,072. Target industries' wages are expected to be at least 115% of that amount, or roughly \$47,000;
- The industry must make capital investments, such as the purchase of equipment;
- There must be an “existing competency” in the community, or an existing geographic cluster of similar companies. For example, there is a wireless communications cluster in Fort Lauderdale and Plantation, which consists of the four largest companies in this field, all located within five miles of each other. Mr. Swindell noted that this is an effective way to promote Fort Lauderdale to similar companies.

He pointed out that marine industries are not included on the State list, and the Marine Industries Association of South Florida is working to change this.

Mr. Swindell distributed a second list, this one including Broward County Targeted Industries. These were compiled from a 1999 study; he pointed out that the list also includes emergent technologies, which the Broward Alliance is focusing on. A new study is presently being completed to update the 1999 target industries list, and is expected before the end of the year. Chair Riehl requested a copy of the new study when it is complete.

Mr. Swindell concluded that one issue that seems to keep marine industries from the State's targeted list is “the wage issue,” as many jobs in the industry do not pay \$47,000/year, despite the required skill level and core competency. He added that he hopes the new study will precipitate the inclusion of this industry.

Ms. Burt-Stewart joined the meeting at this time (4:08 p.m.).

Mr. Pollock asked if all the cities in the Greater Fort Lauderdale designation have “bought in” to the project. Mr. Swindell asserted he would like all the cities to have “an equal chance” of attracting targeted industries.

Vice Chair Krom asked how other industries would best be recommended to the Alliance. Mr. Swindell explained the process is data-driven by the information compiled in the upcoming study, although he felt the consultants would welcome additional feedback.

Mr. Scott suggested the Board could pass a motion, if they wished to add marine industries or others to the list. Vice Chair Krom explained he was thinking of the electronic security industry, from which two major businesses are located in Florida.

Mr. Swindell continued that the Broward Alliance has done two studies: one “definitive analysis” of how Greater Fort Lauderdale compares to other competitive communities, and a corporate headquarters recruitment strategy.

Mr. deVosjoli noted the focus on existing competencies, and asked if other successful, recession-proof industries that do not currently have an existing competency in the area might still be considered relevant. Mr. Swindell felt if an industry that would be “a good fit” – for example, a high-skill, high-wage green industry – is identified, this could fit all other criteria on the State’s target list. He added that of these criteria, having an existing core competency is the “least important.” Core competencies can be built by having similar industries in place, he explained.

Chair Riehl noted that the State allows Counties to identify target industries, and asked how tax refunds fit into this scenario. Mr. Swindell explained that the tax refund program is designed to draw companies into a community and create new jobs for Florida. If a company is part of a targeted industry and moves to Florida, a tax rebate for both State and local taxes will be provided over a four- to six-year period. The State will contribute 80% of this refund, and local government provides the remaining 20%. If the industry contributes over 100 jobs, the County provides 10% and local government provides 10%, and the State’s 80% is leveraged. An additional “direct cash” program contributes another 10%, matched by another 10% from the municipality, to companies contributing over 100 jobs.

Mr. Scott asked what impact the present economic conditions are having on the QTI program – for example, whether the State is currently supporting fewer of these programs. Mr. Swindell agreed this is currently a challenge, as few fields are growing in the present economy. While incentives are designed to influence a company’s behavior, he pointed out that Fort Lauderdale is among the nation’s Top 10 most expensive areas for “Class A office space.”

Ms. Dickey asked if there are incentives to help existing firms. Mr. Swindell allowed that there are no such funds, which is a challenge, as other states are

spending money to attract firms based in Florida, while Florida is not investing money to keep these firms in-state.

Chair Riehl asked if Florida's taxes are considered "too high" among competitive states. Mr. Swindell replied that as Florida has no personal income tax, its tax burden is "quite attractive" by comparison; other states, however, may contribute land or offer a bond to attract businesses.

Mr. deVosjoli asked if the Broward Alliance has a lobbying presence in State government. Mr. Swindell responded that the Alliance does not have a budget for lobbying, although there is a statewide organization, the Florida Economic Development Council, who lobbies on their behalf. He explained that because of the Broward Alliance's public and private support, they must be very cautious with any such initiatives.

Chair Riehl thanked Mr. Swindell for his presentation.

V. Light Up Lauderdale

Chair Riehl introduced Jennifer Nayak, representing the Riverwalk Trust and Light Up Lauderdale Project Manager.

Ms. Nayak explained that Light Up Lauderdale provides holiday lights on the promenade on both sides of the New River. The project originated as a way to connect the cultural, business, and historical elements of the City during Winterfest; they are now promoting the project further into the community.

She advised that the Riverwalk Trust has invested roughly \$50,000 in the project; however, in order for Light Up Lauderdale to continue to grow, corporate and individual sponsors are also needed. They hope to include more enhanced programming elements to draw the interest of families and other local visitors, and to become a destination point during the holidays.

Some of the new efforts for 2009 include lighting Riverwalk Park from mid-November through January 2010. Because of the Super Bowl and Pro Bowl, she asserted there will be a "global spotlight" on the local community, and the project can help draw industry into the City, such as greater opportunities for the film industry.

Ms. Nayak added that marketing and public relations efforts will extend to global websites, and Comcast Media will act as a media sponsor for the event.

The project also increases pedestrian traffic and creates a safety zone within the Downtown area, and Riverwalk Park in particular. Foot traffic is the greatest

deterrent to petty crime. The promenade also acts as a “strong visual backdrop” to other events in the Downtown area.

She concluded that Light Up Lauderdale is an “eco-friendly” event that uses LED lighting and shares power sources with the City, using one-tenth of the power that traditional lights would require.

She noted that the previous year’s park programming was aimed primarily at adults, with little programming contributing a “family-friendly element.” This year, Ms. Nayak explained, they are seeking corporate support to create a dedicated “family fun zone” on Thursdays and Fridays. This effort will try to actively involve the special needs community, understanding that families with special needs are often unable to participate in large-scale holiday programming. This makes the project unique within the tri-county area, Ms. Nayak noted.

In conclusion, she asked the EDAB for its support through either a sponsorship opportunity, in-kind assistance, or helping the project identify businesses that may wish to participate in this nonprofit opportunity.

She explained they would like to “afford the appropriate programming” every weekend. In 2007 and 2008, the City provided \$20,000 toward the project, and Ms. Nayak hoped they would be able to offer similar assistance in 2009. She also hopes to raise an additional \$20,000 from the community.

Chair Riehl agreed the Board would spread the word about the project and encourage its support, perhaps beginning with the City Commission. He added that the Police Department agrees activity in the Riverwalk area serves as a deterrent to crime.

Ms. Dickey agreed that the Super Bowl and Pro Bowl provided an international audience, and coverage of the project could stimulate the City’s economic engines.

Mr. Motwani asked if Light Up Lauderdale is related to Christmas on Las Olas. Ms. Nayak advised the two projects are independent of one another, and the lights will be in place in advance of the Las Olas project.

Ms. Dickey felt the effort will draw in local residents, who normally visit holiday events in Delray Beach or Miami because there are not similar opportunities in Fort Lauderdale.

Motion made by Mr. Pollock, seconded by Ms. Dickey, that the Board recommends the City contribute \$20,000 to Light Up Lauderdale. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

Mr. Pollock asked if Light Up Lauderdale has approached the Super Bowl Host Committee. Ms. Nayak replied that she has reached out to this group, although the response was “neutral.”

Mr. Motwani noted that it might be best to contact the NFL directly, as they are often active in community events and charities. Chair Riehl added that Mayor Seiler is on the Host Committee, and may be able to open doors for Light Up Lauderdale.

VI. Economic Development Advertising and Marketing

Mr. Scott stated he had been made aware that the issue of marketing dollars had arisen at the August 2009 Board meeting. Chair Riehl advised that some members had expressed concern that the Economic Development budget may have decreased.

Mr. Scott explained the Department had been asked to cut their budget as much as possible in order to prevent layoffs or tax hikes. All Departments, with the exception of Public Safety, had been asked to closely examine any discretionary spending. He clarified, however, that although the allocated budget has been cut, Economic Development can always go before the City Commission and seek their support for certain endeavors.

He added that the new City Commission has been “incredibly supportive” of the Department. Regarding the economic development projects currently underway, Mr. Scott advised they would have to request that money “when the time comes.”

He noted that a Budget Hearing is scheduled for later on this evening at 7:00 p.m.

VII. Chair Report

Chair Riehl advised that ten new jobs have been created in the City by Waverunner Tours, which is a new venture for the City. They have recently begun operations.

The other project is the sidewalk cafés, Chair Riehl continued, recalling that one section of the beach is currently allowed to feature these cafés while other sections are not. He is currently working with Mr. Scott and others to move this possibility through the appropriate Departments. Mr. Scott agreed that this is a learning process, and they are attempting to navigate through City Code and other regulations.

Regarding the parking situation discussed at the August meeting, Chair Riehl reported there has been a “push” to include this in Sasaki’s Master Plan. They

have advised City Commissioners that Code is “stifling” development along the beach due to parking issues. He asked that any interested members reach out to their City Commissioners to make them aware that parking should be addressed. Mr. Motwani explained this would involve a review of existing parking Code to discover opportunities for more efficient regulations.

Mr. Pollock agreed this is a concern, and cited the example of the recent National Lifeguard Competition, for which participants and volunteers had to pay \$38/day for parking in South Beach. He noted that the AVP, a professional volleyball organization, is now reconsidering coming to South Beach for this same reason.

Chair Riehl noted that while this was a different issue from parking Code, it was a very good point, and asked that it be an Item on the Board’s next Agenda.

VIII. Director’s Report

Mr. Scott recalled that the parking issue had been raised at the most recent City Commission meeting, and had generated some discussion. He noted as well that in his tenure as Economic Development Director, parking Code was second only to the building permit process in its constancy as an issue.

He felt the major problems were that the parking Code is perceived as too stringent; in addition, there are too few opportunities for shared parking between different businesses located in the same building.

Mr. Scott noted that the City did not wish to slow down the development of the Master Plan; however, he pointed out that the City Commission provided “very clear direction” that they would like parking Code, and these issues in particular, to be reviewed.

He moved on to the business retention and expansion project, Business First, which has been undertaken by the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce. Mayor Seiler addressed the first meeting of the project’s core group, to which the Board had appointed Mr. Motwani. Mr. Scott stated next Wednesday (September 16) will be the official “kickoff” of the program, which will take place at an already scheduled Chamber of Commerce event at noon. Mayor Seiler will be present at this event, and Mr. Scott hoped there would be a media presence as well.

He moved on to the upcoming Super Bowl and Pro Bowl, and informed the Board that the City has been working on some related issues: specifically, Mayor Seiler has asked that the City relax its open container laws on the beach during this period. This issue is expected to come before the City Commission at their October 6, 2009 meeting.

In addition, the Convention Visitors Bureau is working on festive signage for the City during the Super Bowl and Pro Bowl time period. The media center for both events will be located at the Convention Center, and the NFL Corporate Headquarters will be at the Westin Hotel on the beach. There are proposed concerts and food tasting events as well. With this in mind, the City is looking for ways to legally allow exceptions to the sign ordinance.

Mr. Motwani added that NFL representatives are very pleased with the City, as well as the CVB. He stated he wished to publicly commend the City's and CVB's efforts, as it seems every business owner in the City and on the beach will be positively affected.

Regarding Business First, Mr. Motwani continued that the group is compiling a list of businesses of all sizes in different industries, and offered to pass on any business names submitted for consideration by Board members.

Mr. Swindell stated that a medical device company will be holding its ribbon cutting the following week, and asked any interested Board members to attend and provide the business and its new CEO with a warm welcome. Mr. Scott noted that he had made a site visit to the company and was very impressed with the facility.

IX. Old / New Business

- **Communications to City Commission**

None at this time.

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]