



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

APPROVED
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
NOVEMBER 18, 2020, 3:45 P.M.
VIRTUAL MEETING

January-December 2020

<u>Board Members</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Jordan Yates, Chair	P	5	0
Nicholas Kuchova, Vice Chair	P	5	0
Jay Adams	A	3	2
Michael Buonaiuto	P	4	1
Dudly Etienne-Harvard	A	4	1
David Neal	P	5	0
Michael Stara	A	4	1
John Vratsinas	P	5	0

Staff

Daphne Sainvil, Liaison, Governmental and External Affairs Manager
Suzy Joseph, Economic Development Program Analyst
Krystal Permanan, Economic Development Program Analyst
Jerry Jean-Philippe, Moderator
Crysta Parkinson, Recording Secretary, ProtoType, Inc.

Communications to the City Commission

None.

I. Call to Order & Determination of Quorum

Chair Yates called the meeting to order at 2:49 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present.

II. Approval of the October 8, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Vice Chair Kuchova, seconded by Mr. Vratsinas, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

III. Staff Updates – General Update (5 minutes)

New Board Liaison Daphne Sainvil, Governmental and External Affairs Manager, introduced herself to the Board at this time. Ms. Sainvil works in the City Manager’s Office and is involved in legislative and lobbying efforts on behalf of the City as well as

Economic and Community Investment (ECI). She previously worked with Broward County as a legislative policy advisor.

The Board briefly discussed whether to meet in person or through communications technology at their December 2020 meeting. It was determined that the December meeting would be virtual. Ms. Joseph also recalled that the Board had previously discussed the possibility of changing the meeting time to begin at 3:30 p.m. and extend until 5 p.m.

Motion made by Vice Chair Kuchova, seconded by Mr. Neal, to move up the meeting [to] 3:30 to 5. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

IV. Old Business

Chair Yates recalled that at the October meeting, the Board had discussed the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Fort Lauderdale, with members contributing information based upon their areas of expertise. He explained that the intent of this discussion was to identify ongoing issues and rededicate the Board to economic development efforts in light of the current economic uncertainty. Ideas included connecting with the existing entrepreneurial and startup communities, examining what can be done to add value to sectors affected by the pandemic, and reaching out to business groups that may be interested in relocation to Fort Lauderdale.

Chair Yates also noted that several months ago, the Board had worked on a potential branding campaign for the City relative to the business community. Ms. Sainvil requested additional information about this effort. Chair Yates explained that a previous Board member had researched the successful branding campaigns of other cities and come up with a potential slogan of "Bright for Business."

Mr. Neal advised that in addition to the branding discussion, the Board had identified a number of core industries, including boating, technology, hospitality, and education, which were included in a brochure prepared by former Liaison Michael Chen. He recommended keeping these core industries in mind for future efforts.

Chair Yates continued that while the Board had not developed a full branding or marketing campaign, the "Bright for Business" slogan was intended for use in outreach to other groups associated with economic development, such as Chambers of Commerce in other states. He acknowledged that the pandemic had disrupted any efforts of this type.

In an unrelated effort, the Board had also seated a Mission-to-Market (M2M) subcommittee, which was working with a key law firm in Fort Lauderdale before the pandemic began. Chair Yates concluded that the Board is currently seeking to determine where to restart their efforts at this time.

Ms. Sainvil noted that she had met earlier in the day with the Assistant City Manager, who is currently dealing with strategic communications to rebrand and centralize economic development efforts throughout the City. She has been tasked with assisting with this effort and creating a mission that the City Commission could support. She emphasized that she will rely heavily on the Board to assist with rebranding and marketing.

At present, the City is focused on marketing the Business Engagement, Assistance, and Mentorships (BEAMs) program. Further rebranding will involve work with the industries Mr. Neal had identified earlier. Ms. Sainvil advised that her vision was to make Fort Lauderdale a center for tech startups and innovation, including research and development.

Vice Chair Kuchova commented that this is consistent with what has been discussed by the Board in recent months. Mr. Neal added that until a COVID-19 vaccine is available, the City should seek to focus on immediate needs such as industrial and warehouse uses, grocery stores, manufacturing, and similar short-term priorities while also working on longer-term plans to help key industries.

Mr. Buonaiuto shared a graphic with the Board showing new businesses that have recently opened in Fort Lauderdale, including construction, law firms, and vacation rental properties. He recommended that any outreach include all of these businesses, welcoming them to the City and informing them that City Staff is available to assist them as a resource. Some businesses may be interested in securing a disadvantaged business license (DBE). He suggested that the City Department which collects business tax receipt information could provide these new businesses with information on the BEAMs program.

Ms. Sainvil advised that another issue discussed by City Staff has been media outreach, such as videos showcasing new businesses that have filed their taxes within Fort Lauderdale. She emphasized that this is consistent with the priorities expressed by the Board for economic development and growth.

Ms. Sainvil asked if the Board has considered adding a business resiliency/recovery workshop to the BEAMs structure in light of the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic. Mr. Neal stated that there will need to be metrics, a timeline, and core goals to accomplish with a new workshop or module. He felt the Board should establish short-term goals to work toward until a COVID-19 vaccine is available.

Chair Yates asserted that BEAMs is one of the City's strongest economic development tools at present, particularly from a startup perspective. He recalled that there has been discussion of branching out into other incubator programs, particularly those involved with technology. He recalled that the M2M program would have been a successful way to encourage private businesses to bid on government contracts and move technology from the government to the private sector.

With respect to the M2M program, Ms. Sainvil stated that she has not yet spoken with Dr. Chris Ford, who was a principal of the M2M effort, although she has contacted Broward College regarding the M2M initiative. She explained that she hoped to determine how far this program has gone before the M2M Subcommittee meets again. Vice Chair Kuchova encouraged her to contact Dr. Ford due to the opportunity presented by the commercialization of patents.

Vice Chair Kuchova continued that the cruise industry is considering a return to operations in early 2021, which will create opportunities for airports, taxis, hotels, restaurants, and stores, among others. The City may be able to assist from a convening authority perspective in determining what can be done to assure these economic elements fit together. Other opportunities may be identifying virtual opportunities to market the City's stores on the internet and taking extra steps to assure the safety of lodging and hospitality industries. He encouraged the City to consider working more closely with Florida Power and Light (FPL).

Mr. Neal recalled that a previous metric used to measure progress for the Board was the number of construction permits issued each month by the City. He suggested that a better metric could be the issuance and renewal of business licenses. Mr. Buonaiuto suggested that sales tax revenue could also be indicative of what is happening in the local economy. Ms. Sainvil advised that this information may be available from the County and it may be possible to isolate sales tax revenue from Fort Lauderdale.

Mr. Neal noted that there may also be information to be gleaned from tax credits for companies that have moved to the City. Ms. Sainvil pointed out that these businesses are required to report unemployment figures, which could be another useful metric. Chair Yates concluded that the Board will need to determine which metrics may be the most useful for them. Mr. Neal proposed that the Board establish goals they wish to accomplish over the next six months and identify the metrics that will help him measure their progress toward these goals.

Ms. Sainvil advised that the City is working in partnership with the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance and the Chamber of Commerce. Chair Yates recommended connecting any loose ends remaining after Mr. Chen's transition from the role of Liaison, including how he might have secured any leads.

Ms. Sainvil continued that the goal is to encourage corporate relocations from other states and bring that talent to Fort Lauderdale. Mr. Neal emphasized the importance of a lack of state income tax as a reason to attract businesses to South Florida. Ms. Sainvil also pointed out that at the upcoming session, the State Legislature may consider imposing a tax on online sellers that have previously not paid a tax.

Mr. Neal recalled a presentation the Board had seen on the Tech Gateway, which focused on a number of tech companies located in Miami-Dade County. He suggested

that Fort Lauderdale consider a similar effort, citing vacant office space as one incentive. Ms. Sainvil added that this may also require restructuring the land and properties that are currently vacant to entice companies to invest in them.

Vice Chair Kuchova suggested looking into how the City can interface with different Consulates General in South Florida, as well as with national embassies in Washington, D.C. He explained that it could be useful to encourage them to visit Fort Lauderdale during the winter months and engage with them regarding strategic markets the City may want to attract. Ms. Sainvil recalled that there have been discussions of establishing a “world trade center” concept in Fort Lauderdale, which ties into this international outreach as well as Sister Cities relationships.

Ms. Sainvil continued that her goal at present is to establish a solid foundation on which to move forward and entice businesses to relocate to Fort Lauderdale. This may include providing incentives for businesses to participate in the BEAMs Academy, whether they are startups or established businesses.

Mr. Neal asked where the potential world trade center’s offices would be located. Ms. Sainvil replied that the City is looking into possible locations. The timeline for this initiative would be approximately one to two years, once a location has been identified. The entity spearheading this effort is a company based in Brazil. Vice Chair Kuchova characterized the world trade center concept as similar to a franchise, with approximately 300 such locations worldwide.

Mr. Neal continued that the entity interested in funding the trade center concept will be key to bringing this effort to Fort Lauderdale. He agreed that this would be a significant economic stimulator, as participants may come to the City for other reasons as well, such as the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. He suggested that the Board take an active role in identifying a location with adequate space and close access to an airport, as well as letting existing businesses know that this effort is underway.

Ms. Sainvil concluded that she is working in collaboration with Broward County on the world trade center concept. She stated she would keep the Board apprised of any developments. She reiterated that the City is working to attract businesses at any stage of development and encourage them to go through the BEAMs program, tracking their success through surveys.

Chair Yates requested clarification of how the BEAMs process works from a corporate rather than a startup perspective. Ms. Joseph explained that there are three BEAMs series, Solid Foundations for startup businesses, Build on Success for existing/established businesses, and Global Commerce for businesses that plan to go international. Representatives of businesses at any level may attend any BEAMs program of their choice.

Mr. Buonaiuto commented that there may be international entities interested in relocating to Fort Lauderdale who may be sufficiently established that they do not need the guidance provided by BEAMs. Chair Yates agreed, but suggested that BEAMs could introduce an element that would encourage globally successful businesses to engage smaller Fort Lauderdale businesses as vendors. Ms. Joseph confirmed that BEAMs is geared toward assisting small businesses, as most corporations will have already worked through the issues facing smaller entities.

The Board discussed some of the reasons that might attract large businesses to relocate in Fort Lauderdale, such as quality of life and employee culture. Mr. Buonaiuto noted that most of these incentives, including potential tax credits, are packaged by entities outside the Board. These also include both County and State incentives.

Chair Yates observed that rather than taxes, other incentives that could be offered by the City include ways to connect newly relocated businesses with other resources and companies in Fort Lauderdale so they have the best chance to achieve and continue success. These may include a trained workforce as well as a sophisticated and targeted welcome package that helps businesses connect with organizations that can fulfill their needs.

Ms. Sainvil stated that the City is working to revise all ECI marketing materials, and can include materials targeted at specific audiences, such as certain age groups who may be in different stages of developing businesses. Vice Chair Kuchova emphasized the importance of ensuring the City's website is well-conceived and easy to use for businesses seeking information. He noted that a comprehensive intake questionnaire could help the City's economic development experts connect these entities with the appropriate parties, such as the Chamber of Commerce, suppliers, or human resources. Chair Yates noted that the City already has a number of these resources in place, and one of the Board's goals can be to ensure that they can be useful for local businesses.

Vice Chair Kuchova cited the example of the U.S. Business Database, which can be accessed through the Broward County library and can be used to identify specific service providers that can assist with business' needs. The information is accessible at no cost with a library card. Ms. Sainvil advised that she can post this information on the resources page of the Economic Development section of the City's website. Staff can work with the City's Public Information Officers to determine how to share this information.

Ms. Sainvil recommended that the Board members compile lists of their top five priorities and send them to Ms. Joseph's office. The lists would be forwarded to Ms. Sainvil and used in follow-up meetings with the City Manager to show the Board's interests and concerns. It was determined that this would be an Agenda Item for the December 2020 meeting.

V. New Business

- **Junior Achievement's 3DE Program**

This Item was not addressed.

The next virtual EDAB meeting will be December 9, 2020.

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

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