



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

DRAFT

**City of Fort Lauderdale
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD**

July 14, 2021, 3:00 PM
Virtual Meeting Minutes

Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Michael Buonaiuto, Chair	P	7	0
Nicholas Kuchova, Vice Chair	P	5	2
Jay Adams	A	4	3
Michael Stara	P	7	0
Dudly Etienne-Harvard	P	4	3
Michael Lorigas	P	3	0
Katherine Koenig	P	3	0
William Feinberg	P	5	0

Staff

Daphne Sainvil, Liaison, Governmental and External Affairs Manager
Suzy Joseph, Economic Development Representative

Communications to the City Commission

None.

I. Call to Order & Determination of Quorum

Mrs. Joseph called the meeting to order at 3:01 PM Roll was called, and it was noted a quorum was present.

II. Approval of the June 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Michael Lorigas, seconded by Ms. Koenig, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

III. Old Business- SWOT Analysis Discussion

Review and present a strategic measured goal to present to the Commission when the board has a consensus. Chair Buonaiuto discussed using the benchmarks of size of business and the monetary thresholds of businesses moving to the city. There was then discussion of combining some of the SWOT priorities as recommended by LaDawn Townsend, the guest facilitator. Overall, the board decided to move forward with combined priorities.

IV. New Business – Discussion and Benchmarking of Goals

Chair Buonaiuto read back on using a specific figure to keep city and collaborating partners (Alliance, Chamber, DDA, etc) accountable when attracting new businesses. Ms. Sainvil noted that it's not the city's goal/priority. She elaborated that during the July 6, 2021 City Commission meeting, she presented the current economic development status and future incentives and vision for economic development throughout the city and Division. While the city works without partner agencies, holding them accountable isn't our primary job. Our (city/division) focus is on international business, education (workforce training), start up and entrepreneurial ecosystem, as well as continued collaborations with existing and new entities.

Some members still questioned the role of the advisory board and what exactly the Commission is looking for. Ms. Sainvil explained that the Division acts as a conduit of information – reposting/sharing partner information, vignette videos, but not necessarily all of what the Alliance is targeting. Our small businesses need to be highlighted, introduction of more cash incentives/incentives, creation of an economic development trust fund. The Commission want to focus on infrastructure, broadband, etc. nut doesn't want us to do exactly the same as the Alliance – they have their own marketing budgets. The EDAB job is to make recommendations to the economic development division and commission.

How do we entice small business and business as a whole to stay in Fort Lauderdale? There are businesses who leave because other cities offer more – cash incentives, workforce education/job skill force, etc. Member Etienne-Harvard said: the EDAB comes up with ideas and Ms. Sainvil will share them with the commissioners. Ms. Sainvil agreed and also explained that some recommendations can be done through the Division. Mr. Feinberg asked if businesses were really leaving. Ms. Sainvil said yes. Also look at the businesses we've lost out on – Blackstone, Goldman Sachs, etc. While the Alliance pursues them, the city can also add value with programs, incentives, etc. It's like the tunnel – this isn't an Alliance thing, it's a city-driven thing. However, it's a different conversation all together. What can we do to make the city a more enticing investment?

Question: What's the benefit of the EDAB?

Answer: This is a question the EDAB must answer.

Question: Do we know why the companies left the city?

Answer: No files, no real answers, or existing data. Note that business tax receipts and building permits are not reliable means of collecting data.

Member Etienne-Harvard: Funding is an issue. Proposed a pitch forum with investors. Not like the idea of patent attorney with M2M project.

Member Kuchova: Look into revisiting the M2M initiative with FIU and Dr. Chris Ford. Gave examples of Dutch companies in Fort Lauderdale (highlighted in Invest: Fort Lauderdale Magazine. The city should utilize the relationships established with FPL and other prominent businesses to sponsor prizes for ideas.

Ms. Sainvil: the joint venture was put on hold due to clarifying buy-in from the Commission/Mayor and the pandemic. We will eventually reach out and continue conversation.

Member Koenig: We should work with NSU Innovation Center and partner with them in trainings and showcasing innovative entrepreneurs in the city. Perhaps host a career fair.

Member Feinberg: Incubators have been around forever; however, no one knows where they are or what they're doing. The city should act as a conduit in sharing the story.

Question: Is there a list of incubators the EDAB can have?

Answer: None that we have on file, but EDAB could begin research and create it.

Suzy Joseph, Staff: AERO Partners is our overall community partner. They are hosting a business expo. We will send EDAB members information about it.

No one really knows who AERO is or what they do. Sharing the community events with EDAB will help notify the community about economic development happenings.

Social Media Discussion

There was a social media discussion – creating videos for outreach. The Division envisions creating more videos addressing the city's targeted industries. City Strategic Communications is currently understaffed. While the new Director is attempted to reach a larger audience, the city doesn't have multiple marketing staff available. CARES/ARP federal funds are going to Infrastructure and to make up for lost revenue. While we have established our economic development social media handles, the following isn't there yet. There isn't a consensus on what to market. Each commissioner has a focus. From driving workforce training programs beyond entrepreneurship to expanding the entertainment district and driving an 18-hour city – at the end of the day we need to look at public safety initiatives downtown, infrastructure, transportation, etc. All this ties to economic development. Until we address these issues, it doesn't make sense to pour money into the pot. The foundation needs to be set in order to be successful. The city sent out a business survey; however, the results were lacking.

Tasks:

- Submit 5 questions you would ask a business for a survey. This is to find out why they are leaving/staying, resources they have or are lacking. Can use local restaurants/hoteliors to provide gift certificates if a survey is submitted.
- Create a video testimonial about your business or why you chose Fort Lauderdale.
- Provide a short list of local businesses to promote on social media.

Notes that EDAB members do not work directly with city staff, other than the Economic Development Division through Ms. Sainvil. Contact with business community and receives questions about city business incentives, etc should also go to Ms. Sainvil.

Ms. Sainvil then briefly spoke about the Fort Lauderdale Business Ambassador Program. The EDAB members will be the testers and pilot to create a successful program and establish the parameters. To answer another question, the city doesn't have a separate TV station (other than FLTV) local channel that broadcasts the meetings and other looping information; however, we have our media relationships.

We can work to promote adult education/technical schools. Work to focus on the manufacturing aspect of startups.

Ms. Sainvil shared the videos done to showcase initial marketing. Members agreed that it needed to be more widely distributed. Ms. Sainvil said she would share the videos and social media handles with members. Also working to use consistent and simple tag lines:

“Live. Work. Play. Invest”

“Everyone Under the Sun”

“Work in the Cloud. Live in the Sun”

“Work Where You Vacation”

Employment Resources

Staff will begin creating a fact sheet with staffing resources available in the city.

Separate Workshop/Joint Meeting with City Commission

Members revisited the discussion in June about meeting jointly with the City Commission to give and receive feedback and additional instruction pertaining to the EDAB purpose. Ms. Sainvil reiterated the presentation that was given in July would answer any outstanding questions. Currently, the Commission is on break and if the EDAB doesn't have anything concrete, then time may be spent more productively by creating a plan/progress to the Commission.

Ms. Sainvil also said no weekend workshop was possible due to challenges in logistics. EDAB agreed that a weekend meeting is not necessary, time management will be used with each meeting. Ms. Sainvil also mentioned the politics of meeting with the Commission. Election and budget cycle is upon us. So everyone is extremely busy and may not be available to meet.

V. Next Meeting: August 11, 2021.

VI. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

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