



APPROVED

CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

December 14, 2022 at 3:00 PM

www.fortlauderdale.gov/government/edab

Meeting Minutes

Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Michael Stara, Chair	P	9	1
Jay Adams	P	8	2
Dudly Etienne-Harvard	P	7	3
Enrique Bargioni, Vice Chair	P	4	0
Russ Klenet	P	3	1
William Feinberg	P	8	2
Kenneth Herz *new*	P	1	0

Staff

Suzy Joseph, Economic Development Representative/EDAB Staff Liaison (Present)

Amber Cabrera, Administrative Supervisor (Present)

Daphnee Sainvil, Government Affairs & Economic Development Division Manager (Absent)

Communication to the City Commission

No Communication to the Commission.

I. Call to Order & Determination of Quorum

Chair Stara called the meeting to order at 3:03 PM. Roll was called, and it was noted that there was a quorum.

II. Guest Speaker, Fort Lauderdale Mayor Dean Trantalis

Mayor Trantalis explained his vision of the City and how he plans on getting there. Fort Lauderdale is experiencing a migration of the tech industry and financial services. A goal of his is to diversify the city's economy and to stop relying on real estate because the city has no control over interest rates and the effects they have on the market. Despite the city's strong hospitality and tourism markets, a pandemic showed just how unsustainable those markets can be, which is why he believes in diversifying them. In his example, he explained that a motion picture studio is coming to Fort Lauderdale because of the talent, culture, and of course location. The studio will create 300 to 400 hundred trade-specific jobs. The city is no longer in the shadow of any big city, and it has the big players to prove it. He continued to mention that he was invited to the presidential signing of the marriage protective, and the event provided a great networking opportunity.

Chair Stara said the board has a lot of questions, and some people on the board have presented initiatives to the City Council that got turned down. Several boards have resigned because they don't get support for their efforts.

Suzy Joseph clarified Chair Stara's statement, saying the Franchise Expo was the event where board member Aaron Baron provided the Commission with a recommendation.



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Chair Stara said that Daphnee isn't coming to the meetings and most approvals have to go through her, which is causing delays. **Mayor Trantalis** asked Scott Wyman, Chief of Staff, if he had heard about the recommendation and requested, they send it directly to his office to avoid missing out on opportunities. There's nothing more frustrating than seeing opportunities being wasted, especially local ones like the aquatic center that's been unused for 10 years. The board was reminded to get in touch with him directly if there are any opportunities for the city to consider.

Chair Stara is not sure if the new city council is an advocate for economic development but believes that the mayor is the biggest advocate.

Mayor Trantalis said all three new council members support economic development in their own way since they are just getting their feet wet and will soon understand each other's views. He says economic development is the second most important thing for a ruling body. The first thing is public safety, but the second is economic development. A lot of young people are looking for housing and jobs in the city, so there's a demand for residential living. Furthermore, he said that he welcomes the board to invite each commission to the meeting to get their perspective or even have a joint meeting.

Action Item: Prepare for a Joint Commission meeting

Chair Stara affirmed the board's commitment to economic development but wanted to find out what the commission is envisioning for economic development and what they can do.

Mayor Trantalis expressed his vision and goals and gave one example like commuter rail service from Miami to West Palm Beach, which would make it easier for people to commute between cities. Additionally, the Department of Transportation proposed constructing a bridge in the city, however, the city is advocating that the County and the Department of Transportation support a tunnel instead of a bridge. In addition, he keeps reassuring the board that they have a reason and an obligation to talk about those projects and to engage with various organizations in the city, like the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance, Neighborhood Civic Associations, Broward Workshop, etc. It's critical to have a transportation network and viability to embrace those kinds of changes in a city. Transportation is not a direct driver of economic development, but it plays a crucial role in a city.

Member Feinberg asked if the board need to focus on one area? What about a group? Is there an industry the city has trouble attracting or developing? In his example of the Galleria Mall, he said it's an opportunity for the city, but there's negative feedback.

Mayor Trantalis noted that in 1982, the Galleria was a gorgeous mall and mainly picked Fort Lauderdale because I am a shopper. The previous owners clearly didn't know what they were doing because they let it deteriorate by design, even as different ownerships took over and passed from hand to hand. They would have told the city that the space needed to be upgraded because of trends and changes in mall design. This is because Aventura, Sawgrass, and Dania Point are all being remodeled and expanded. Galleria Mall owners, however, don't feel the need to redesign or expand because they want the public to think malls don't exist anymore. Instead, they want to build a residential component that removes half



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the mall, keeping the restaurants and Macy's. The community didn't buy into the idea. Wealthy locals are talking about approaching the pension fund to buy out the Galleria.

Members Etienne-Harvard asked: Will there be any provision for the Film organization to hire locally in order to bring in more people? **Mayor Trantalis** said they've agreed to hire trade jobs within the community after meeting with film executives. **Member Etienne-Harvard** clarified that the agreement to hire within the community isn't just about trade jobs, but about local preference for the film industry. In addition, she asked if the city has a staff person who makes sure the agreement is followed. **Mayor Trantalis** explained there isn't a specific staff member in the City who will be responsible for enforcement of the agreement because the city doesn't have movie staff.

Member Etienne-Harvard wants to know if the city will mimic the County's establishment of a program supporting local residents in Broward County. **Mayor Trantalis** said that Broward County has a dedicated Film Commissioner, which isn't specifically created to focus on job creation, rather the Film Commissioner attracts movie industry principals to do work throughout the county. The county and city are working to provide some incentives. The state did not reauthorize film tax credits and we're looking to see if the reauthorization occurs.

Member Klenet said whenever the project is 100% financed by the private sector, there's no preference or incentive for local companies, and if they asked the county for incentives, they'd have to talk to the Office of Economic and Small Business Development about what can be done to help small businesses.

Mayor Trantalis said the film studio is a P3 project where the land is being leased, so local preference has been agreed upon. Additionally, the film company didn't want to be confined to only hiring locals if they didn't have the experience or talent. In exchange, they agreed to search for talent within the local community first before hiring and searching outside the community.

Vice Chair Bargioni said that despite the recession, the city will be protected thanks to the momentum and economic growth in the past few years. Diversifying the economy is the key to resilience in tough times. As a board of action, each member of the board has a concentration area, and he chose innovation. Therefore, he recommended six companies to the staff, all of which are extremely well established and leaders in their fields. Komatsu was one of the six names on the list. As staff prepare for outreach, the mayor was asked for his opinion on the most effective way to contact those companies.

Mayor Trantalis said that he didn't know much about cold calling, but Daphnee's in charge of Economic Development. Originally, Daphnee was supposed to cold call; however, so many people want to move to the city that it will require extra staffing. Daphnee's role involves managing Government Affairs and Economic Development and with the fast-paced growth of the city, more staff is needed. **Vice Chair Bargioni** reiterated his earlier comment that he recommended a list of six companies from different fields for possible outreach, and in an effort not to overwhelm the staff, Suzy chose Velo 3D. **Mayor Trantalis** commented that Velo 3D is a manufacturing company, and the city is built out with limited space, and it would not be the best fit.



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Amber Cabrera will provide an update from the staff meeting on the outreach efforts of the six recommended companies.

Chair Stara asked if anything can be done with venture capital (VC) groups. **Mayor Trantalis** answered that there are some venture capitalists here, but Miami's jazziness seems to attract them more. However, we've been told that financial services find Fort Lauderdale to be a better place to do VC. Venture capitalists will prefer the city because of its culture and affordable space. However, he expressed that he would rather take a conservative approach instead of buying into the trend of adapting to what's hot right now.

Chair Stara asked how strongly does the city have to compete with other Broward cities? **Member Feinberg** said there's not much competition because businesses realize how much traffic Fort Lauderdale brings and believes in a few years the city will be on par with Miami events such as the Food and Wine festival, making the city even more attractive to businesses.

Mayor Trantalis said that there is no shortage of restaurants, and we really don't compete with any other Broward City because we [the city] have all the major brands. Along with selling the city's name and American culture, he continues to promote the name of the City. When you talk to realtors about beach properties, they estimate that 75% of buyers are domestic and 25% are foreign, but in Miami it's the opposite. Ft. Lauderdale would complement Miami, not compete. He appointed a few members a couple years ago, and they said all the board did was invite people to talk about real estate. Real estate is critical, but it's only one component of diversification. The city needs to diversify its economy so it can be resilient and withstand whatever else comes along.

Member Feinberg said the board members all have different areas of focus, so they don't just look out for real estate opportunities. **Mayor Trantalis** said the city appreciates the development of the Ft. Lauderdale brand beyond the "Spring Break City." During his trip to Athens, he spoke about antisemitism. The mayor said he enjoys showing off the city. Furthermore, he said the city brand continues to brand itself as family friendly with family-centric centers like the soccer stadium, aquatic center, and new Panthers hockey rink. **Member Adams** said that the lifestyle and safety help grow the city's population, and safe streets need attention and support.

Mayor Trantalis said that the concern about safe streets comes from individual habits. He's seen jaywalkers and panhandlers weaving in and out of traffic. In the past, the Commission tried to pass an ordinance regulating panhandlers; however was stopped by the Courts. Nevertheless, the city attorney was able to craft a new ordinance specifying that they [panhandlers] would have to stay on the sidewalk. Most of the transportation/pedestrian funding comes from MPO and the federal government which requires the city to implement certain things to receive such funding (i.e., Complete Street designs). **Member Adams** said there needs to be more protected bicycle lanes and ways to slow down traffic throughout the city. The **mayor** agreed further stating that he fought for painted bicycle lanes when he was commissioner.

Vice Chair Bargioni reiterated the mayor's comments on how economic development is the second most important element. He further explained its importance to Florida's economic success.



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Chair Stara said that Daphnee's staff needs extra support, and the EDAB wants to have her at meetings regularly. The **Mayor** reiterated that Daphnee is being pulled in multiple directions and said they will have a conversation as to how she will be able to attend more meetings in the future.

Member Adams wants to know more about the recommendation to take over the City CRA internally. **Amber Cabrera** said that the CRA recommendation was brought to the Commission, and they said there was nothing they could do.

Vice Chair Bargioni asked for an update on the Division staff meeting regarding the 6 companies. **Amber Cabrera** then read the update from Daphnee, as she is out sick, on her behalf. In sum, the message stated that she will have individual meetings with each EDAB member in the new year to discuss the vision and goals. I [Amber] will schedule the meetings based on availability. The full list of each person's goals will be discussed in the February meeting to carefully craft targeted goals to accomplish during this fiscal year. Accomplishments can then be presented to the City Commission at the end of the FY, which is September 2023. Other things mentioned:

1. *Our new website is almost complete and will be launched in test mode in January/February.*
2. *The City manager will speak to members at the next meeting (January).*
3. *Specifically for Mr. Bargioni. We are developing a meaningful city-specific outreach program that will allow us to attract businesses to the city. Thank you for providing the list of 6 businesses; however, they need to be vetted more thoroughly and the latter must be discussed with the city manager and commission. We are creating this official outreach program, internally, because past Division predecessors and Commissions saw the city as "able to sell itself" and didn't believe in engaging in true outreach. Members should know that our outreach will not be duplicative of what is done by the Alliance, Chamber, or Visit Lauderdale. We will continue to support our partner organizations; however, we will shape a program unique to the city to specifically target organizations that will give us the competitive advantage. We will continue to encourage investment in the city and in our small and micro-businesses. Attracting venture capital is key to future planning. We are always looking to the future, and ways our outreach can strengthen our current economic culture. The one thing Miami lacks is a solid foundation.*
4. *Outreach efforts will consist of surveying the needs of existing businesses, building, and strengthening key partnerships (ex. Urban League as a CDFI), possibly expanding incentives (monetary and non-monetary). Best practices in other states and cities are being researched. While at a conference in KC, I met with some other city officials who have robust programs we can tailor to the city. It's important to note that it's easy to write a plan but difficult to execute the plan without support. I expect the EDAB to support it when it's presented to them after the holidays.*

There was further explanation that despite Daphnee's absence at meetings, she is attentive to their needs and wants.

Member Klenet explained what a business does to pick a location. He said first a business does market research, and sees if there's a market for the idea, then it figures out whether there is a workforce. Eventually they'll hire consultants to do research to see if the area is right for their business. Next, they ask what the local government is offering. For example, Sunrise hired a company to do research on



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businesses that want to relocate. The city might want to look into that. The city could short circuit the process and get a qualified prospect by providing an inventory of what the city has available, instead of cold calling. In his opinion, the city knows what it has to offer, but it doesn't know who's looking to relocate/expand. As he continues to explain, the two biggest questions a CEO asked was where my employees' kids were going to school? The second question is where are they going to live? Seeing as there's a low housing stock, he wants the board to market what's available in the city. **Chair Stara** asked Amber if there is any database of companies that have relocated or failed to relocate to the city. **Amber** said she wasn't sure and would look into it. **Member Klenet** said that the City wouldn't know that information, and maybe the local office of Cushman and Wakefield could help.

Action Item: Request Cushman & Wakefield as a speaker

Amber Cabrera informed the board that March 8, 2023 is a City Commission meeting. The Clerk wants to know if the board wants to hold the meeting or change it? **Board Members** decided to meet on March 8th.

Member Etienne-Harvard asked if everyone would be ready to discuss and focus on the key points that were discussed today. **Amber** suggested that members should take Commission ideas as a whole, not just the Mayor's, and invited them to the City Commission goal setting meeting scheduled for the end of January, as it's an opportunity for the board to hear the City Commission's goals.

Board members discussed the city's willingness to incentivize businesses – what that would be – before making cold calls. Additional discussion centered around limited land availability. It's imperative to give businesses a tangible incentive.

Member Klenet suggested that the board take a year to figure out why people are moving or at least considering South Florida – what are they looking for? He suggests reaching out to various CBRE organizations. What are the relocation destinations? I don't think sidewalks and streetlights are a major factor in relocating. In addition, he wants to know what major employers are coming to Fort Lauderdale? And what do those business expect? Then he suggests the board sit down with the City Manager and City Commissioners individually and give them a report based on the research. **Member Adams** added that most people aren't working in offices anymore as they are now working remote.

Chair Stara provided a recap of the discussion – Cushman and Wakefield as future speakers to find out what business are looking for to relocate, while Vice Chair Bargioni attempts outreach with those 6 businesses.

Suzy Joseph said she spoke to some tech companies at TechPalooza and most of them said they're remote, so she asked what the members thought of the city being a tech hub given that the tech companies are remote.

Member Klenet emphasized the focus on the current assets the City currently offers.



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Approval of the October 12, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the October 12, 2022 draft minutes was made by Mr. Feinberg and seconded by Mr. Bargioni. The motion was passed unanimously.

Chair Stara reminded the board that they'll discuss FY23 at the next meeting and asked new member Kenneth Herz to think about his area of focus. Then provided time for brief member introductions to the new member Kenneth Herz.

III. Old Business

Area of concentration Update

No area of concentration reports was conducted.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by Member Feinberg and seconded by Vice Chair Bargioni. The motion was passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 4:47 PM.

IV. Next Meeting: January 11, 2022 at 3:00 PM

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