

Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation
Board of Directors Meeting
March 15, 2021
Via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

The following Directors were present:

Robby Brewer, Principal, Lerch, Early & Brewer (Chair)
Kevin Beverly, President & CEO, Social & Scientific Systems (Vice Chair)
Elana Fine, COO, VWG Wealth Management (Secretary)
Carmen Larsen, Aquas Inc. (Treasurer); *departed at 10 am*
Anthony Featherstone, Executive Director, WorkSource Montgomery
Angela Graham, President & CEO, Quality Biological
Matthew Lee, President & CEO at FASTech, Inc.
Dr. Sanjay Rai, SVP for Academic Affairs, Montgomery College
Ola Sage, CEO, CyberRx; *departed at 10 am*
Tien Wong, CEO, Lore Systems, Tech 2000, Opus8, Inc.

The following Directors were absent:

Jerome Fletcher, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Montgomery County (Ex-officio)
Terry Forde, CEO, Adventist Healthcare
Andrew Friedson, Councilmember, Montgomery County (Ex-officio)

Other members of the public were present, consistent with the requirements of the Open Meetings Act and in accordance with the Corporation's Bylaws. A full list of participants is enclosed.

Board Chair Brewer called the virtual meeting to order at 8:33 am. A quorum of the Directors was present. Mr. Brewer noted that the County Executive was holding a briefing with the Council concurrent to the Board meeting, in advance of the public release of his FY22 budget request at noon, necessitating the absence of certain directors. Ms. Hardy was designated to take minutes.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Ms. Larsen moved to approve the Consent Agenda which included the minutes from the February 15, 2021 Board meeting as presented. Dr. Rai seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Montgomery County Economic Indicators: Second Half of 2020

Mr. Bedford presented an overview of the economic indicators for Montgomery County for the third and fourth quarters of 2020. Mr. Bedford highlighted changes in employment and job growth, venture capital investments, and commercial real estate. Mr. Bedford noted the county's success in the life sciences industry and discussed the competitiveness of the housing market.

MCEDC Economic Action Plan

Ms. Miller reported that the final members of the Advisory Panel are being confirmed. A total of 22 members have been selected. Meetings are scheduled to be in April and will conclude in July.

Proposed County Council Legislation

Mr. Brewer discussed two pieces of legislation that were recently introduced in the County Council. The first bill (10-21, introduced by Councilmember Friedson) will transfer the responsibility for drafting the County's Economic Strategic (CES) Plan from the County Executive's office to MCEDC. The second bill

(11-21, introduced by Councilmember Glass) will require MCEDC to live stream all open meetings and maintain a public archive of all videos recorded. Mr. Brewer noted that the bills will be discussed during an upcoming unscheduled PHED Committee worksession. Public hearings will be held for both bills on March 23. Mr. Brewer noted that MCEDC will submit letters for the hearings.

General Assembly Legislative Update

Ms. Swanson, Vice President of Government Relations for the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, briefed the Board on recent legislative activities in Annapolis. Ms. Swanson noted that of the 130 bills that she is currently tracking only 30 have passed to the other chamber.

Ms. Swanson discussed the components of several key bills that will impact the business community including the \$1 billion RELIEF Act that had been signed into law by the Governor, the Maryland Essential Workers Protection Act and the Digital Ad Tax. Ms. Swanson highlighted concerns expressed by the business community regarding the Maryland Essential Workers Protection Act including the requirement to provide hazard pay and the definition of “emergency.”

Ms. Larsen inquired about House Bill 1373 and Senate Bill 960 which relate to the regulation of the public private partnerships overseeing the expansion of I-495. Ms. Swanson noted that both bills were introduced late and have not yet had a hearing. Ms. Larsen requested that Ms. Swanson help keep the Board updated on how the bills may impact future construction.

Ms. Graham discussed the potential impact of the Essential Workers Protection Act on the county’s manufacturing community and inquired about whether the bio community has issued a response to the bill. Mr. Stewart confirmed that the Maryland Tech Council has expressed their opposition in both chambers. Ms. Graham expressed concern that the bill may discourage other manufacturing companies from relocating to the county and encouraged further review of the potential impact of the bill on the business community.

Ms. Swanson discussed the elements of the Digital Ad Tax noting that a federal lawsuit was filed against the bill last year in an attempt to prohibit the costs associated with the tax from being passed on to customers. The Digital Ad Tax is a first-in-the-nation law that is expected to face legal challenges. The tax was included in the Kirwan legislation to help fund higher education.

Mr. Wu announced that Ms. Swanson will be leaving the Chamber at the end of the month. Mr. Wu thanked Ms. Swanson for her work and the partnership with the Montgomery County Chamber and wished her well in her next endeavor.

Business Development Update

Mr. Stewart reported that Sensi Biotherapeutics and NexImmue went public last month. Mr. Stewart stated that Chicago-based Horizon Therapeutics recently acquired Viela Bio for \$3 billion and hopes to grow its workforce within the county significantly.

Mr. Stewart announced that United Solutions recently moved their headquarters to 909 Rose in the Pike District. Mr. Stewart noted that the business development and marketing teams are working to update MCEDC’s Business Response Guide which will include additional resources for minority and women-owned businesses.

Dr. Rai inquired about how the community is informed about the success that the county has experienced in the life sciences space. Ms. O’Keefe discussed the marketing team’s communications efforts and ongoing collaboration with the County Executive’s office. Mr. Wu noted plans for the establishment of a public/private marketing partnership to amplify branding efforts.

Ms. Larsen revisited the concept of a formal welcoming program for new businesses. Dr. Rai suggested that MCEDC could purchase an ad in the Washington Post to welcome new companies.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Larsen reviewed the financial statements for the period ending February 28. Ms. Larsen highlighted expenditures related to the administration of the Restaurant Relief Grants program and discussed budget variances.

Governance Committee Report

Dr. Rai reported that the Governance Committee met to discuss the six-year term limit for Board members as currently outlined in the Bylaws. Dr. Rai reported that the Committee agreed that the six-year term limit is still appropriate.

Dr. Rai noted that the terms for Mr. Brewer, Ms. Sage, Mr. Wong, and Ms. Larsen will expire at the end of the current fiscal year and will require County Executive nomination and Council approval to extend their service. Dr. Rai noted that the Governance Committee recommends that these members be presented to the County Executive for reappointment.

Dr. Rai noted that six board member terms will expire at the end of next year. Ms. Fine suggested that this will cause the organization to be in a challenging position with regard to institutional consistency and recommended that the schedule for adding new members be revisited.

President & CEO Report

Mr. Wu reported that the County Executive will be holding a press conference to publicly present his FY22 budget recommendations at noon. Mr. Wu could not announce the embargoed budget request number until then but noted that the proposed budget for MCEDC affirms the organization's role in the county's recovery and economic development efforts. A separate message will be sent informing the Board after the recommended budget has been formally released.

Mr. Wu discussed the Governor's recent executive order which will relax pandemic-related business restrictions. Mr. Wu also discussed the American Rescue Plan Act and noted that it includes funding for state and local governments.

Regarding the Restaurant Relief Grants, Phase II, Mr. Tompkins updated the Board on the status of completed applications and funds disbursed to date. Mr. Tompkins noted that over 1,800 businesses have been serviced by MCEDC over the last year.

Mr. Wu reported that the Commerce Cabinet met recently to discuss several initiatives including the Economic Recovery Strategy, Economic Development Customer Service Initiative, Economic Development Regulatory Reform Initiative, Public/Private Marketing Partnership, and the Downtown Silver Spring Project. Mr. Wu noted that the next meeting of the Commerce Cabinet will be held in May. Mr. Brewer suggested that the Board could be briefed next on the Commerce Cabinet's initiatives at the June meeting.

WorkSource Montgomery Update

Mr. Featherstone reported that the American Job Centers are still closed due to the pandemic but are expected to open on-site sometime in 2021. Services continue to be provided remotely.

Mr. Featherstone noted that WSM will be providing testimony to the Finance Committee of the Maryland General Assembly in support of the Post Crisis Jobs Act of 2021. This bill which will provide funding for digital learning. Mr. Featherstone noted that WSM will receive unrestricted funding through the RELIEF Act for workforce-related activities and discussed the possibility of funding additional Biotech Boot Camps.

Ms. Graham announced the successful completion of the first round of the Biotech Boot Camp. Ms. Graham will share outcomes and lessons learned at the April meeting. Dr. Rai noted that some Boot Camp graduates have accepted jobs and/or received multiple offers.

New Business

No new business items were discussed.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 am.

MCEDC Board Meeting Attendees March 15, 2021 Via Zoom

1. Brandon Bedford, MCEDC
2. Kevin Beverly, Social & Scientific Systems
3. Robby Brewer, Lerch, Early & Brewer
4. Ronald Daversa
5. Laurie Edberg, Montgomery County Government
6. Elana Fine, VWG Wealth Management
7. Anthony Featherstone, WorkSource Montgomery
8. Gigi Godwin, Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
9. Angela Graham, Quality Biological
10. Stacey Hardy, MCEDC
11. Carmen Larsen, Aquas Inc.
12. Matthew Lee, FASTech, Inc.
13. Sarah Miller, MCEDC
14. Kristin O'Keefe, MCEDC
15. Susan Prince, Rockville Economic Development, Inc.
16. Cindy Rivarde, Rockville Economic Development, Inc.
17. Dr. Sanjay Rai, Montgomery College
18. Ola Sage, CyberRx
19. Gene Smith, Montgomery County Government
20. Brad Stewart, MCEDC
21. Tricia Swanson, Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
22. Bill Tompkins, MCEDC
23. Tien Wong, Lore Systems, Tech 2000, Opus8, Inc.
24. Benjamin Wu, MCEDC