

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMERCE CABINET
FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 2021
MEETING MINUTES**

Attendance

Commerce Cabinet Members:

Ben Wu
Christopher Conklin
David Dise
Adam Ortiz
Mitra Pedoeem
Richard Madaleno
Jeremy Criss
Aseem Nigam
Ash Shetty
Kelly Groff
Marlene Michaelson

Guests:

Scott Pomeroy
Gene Smith
Ben Seigel
Judy Stephenson
Julio Murillo
Tom Hucker
David Kunes
Jerome Fletcher
Grace Denno

MCEDC Staff:

Bill Tompkins
Sarah Trujillo
Christy Blake

MCEDC President & CEO Ben Wu, the Commerce Cabinet Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. A quorum of the Commerce Cabinet members was present. Ms. Blake was designated to take minutes.

Chair Report and Overview of Commerce Cabinet Initiatives

Mr. Wu opened the meeting with review of the five Commerce Cabinet initiatives that have been agreed upon from previous meetings and discussions. An update on these initiatives are the main subjects for discussion at today's meeting with a presentation on the Unified Showcase Location Impact Project by the Project Lead, Mr. Ben Seigel

Initiative Update: Support of Montgomery County Economic Recovery Strategies

At the November 2020 meeting, Doug Firstenberg briefed the Commerce Cabinet on the newly released recommendations from the County Executive's Economic Advisory Group (EAG). Mr. Wu stated that the Commerce Cabinet will work with the EAG to address the recommendations in their report, "Economic Roadmap to Recovery and Long-Term Success." Additionally, the County Executive and the Council also

created task forces over the past year to develop additional recommendations for economic recovery. There will be an effort to synthesize the many economic development recommendations to develop a consensus set of executable initiatives.

Initiative Update: Economic Development Customer Service Initiative

Mr. Wu gave an update regarding the customer service initiative, stating that the work of the initiative is to provide a framework to better address the County’s business engagement among Commerce Cabinet member organizations. As part of this initiative, there will be a specific focus on gathering information to collect feedback from customers, as well as to provide data-driven metrics to measure the effectiveness of organizational client interaction. An outside consultancy contract would need to be issued. Mr. Wu reported that he intends to have MCEDC provide half of the funding for the contract and would explore additional funding to finance the remainder.

Initiative Update: Economic Development Regulatory Reform Initiative

Mr. Wu reported that MCEDC staff will be creating an inventory of regulatory reform initiatives that each of the Commerce Cabinet organizations have undertaken or intends to undertake. The intention is to collect these reform efforts to inventory past or ongoing reform efforts and determine whether additional improvements for regulatory relief may be needed. In tandem with this inventory, MCEDC will be aggregating recommendations from various County-related reports from the economic recovery task forces for regulatory reform actions. Each of the Commerce Cabinet members have been asked to designate a staff Point of Contact to work with the Commerce Cabinet lead staff (Christy Blake) on this initiative to help outline current actions/recommendations and further suggestions.

Initiative Update: Public-Private Marketing Partnership

Mr. Wu reported that he continues to work on an initiative to establish a Montgomery County public-private partnership to create a strategic marketing and branding initiative. This initiative will seek to help with branding efforts for the County and for economic development attraction initiatives. MCEDC will begin the process of creating a formal P3 marketing structure.

Initiative Update: Unified Impact Project on Downtown Silver Spring

Project Lead for the Silver Spring Impact Project, Mr. Ben Seigel, gave an overview of his work on the initiative. As part of the presentation, Mr. Seigel discussed the initiative’s purpose, why Silver Spring was chosen as the first location, and the stakeholder input he has received to date.

Mr. Seigel identified four potential targeted project areas and outlined 15 specific actions that could be taken in the initiative. The project areas include:

1. Sector/Cluster Growth
2. Small, Local, Minority owned Business Support & Development
3. Public Health/Safety & Infrastructure Improvements
4. Arts/Cultural Amenities

Following Mr. Seigel’s presentation, the meeting was open for discussion about the presentation. Regarding a discussion about creating a special initiative to promote small women and minority owned businesses procurement for private-sector Silver Spring companies, Mr. Shetty suggested that a consultation with the County Attorney to better understand any potential legal barriers would be useful before launching a minority procurement initiative.

Council President Tom Hucker also participated in the meeting and stated that he is eager to work closely with stakeholders in Silver Spring. As its district representative, Councilman Hucker asserted that Silver Spring is in crisis; reporting that problems in the area are increasing and accelerating under the pandemic. He pushed a sense of urgency to get to work and suggested to engage other departments beyond the Commerce Cabinet, as well as major property owners, chamber members, and other stakeholders.

Mr. Madaleno asked a question regarding the reference to a “clean tech hub,” asking if this proposed project would be a way to expand the NOAA headquarters as a larger anchor for growth in Silver Spring. Mr. Seigel stated the project would be aspirational and if there is a desire to move forward, to recommend putting together a business plan concerning the concept.

Ms. Michaelson highlighted the need for more outreach to folks outside of the Cabinet to ensure there is not overlap in efforts, while also remaining focused on one area at a time.

Mr. Wu stated that the goal of today’s presentation was to present the various options to the Commerce Cabinet and to have the members reach a consensus, if possible, hone down on the top areas of interest so that the initiative’s specific next steps could be presented at the next meeting. Other Commerce Cabinet members were solicited to discuss any specific projects they have already implemented, or plan to implement, that impact Silver Spring and could be part of this initiative.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned 3:01 PM.