

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMERCE CABINET
FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 2021
MEETING MINUTES**

Attendance

Commerce Cabinet Members:

Adam Ortiz
Aseem Nigam
Ash Shetty
Casey Anderson
Chris Conklin
David Dise
Mitra Pedoeem
Richard Madaleno
Benjamin Wu

Guests:

Atara Margolies
Brian Anleu
Eric Feldman
Gene Smith
Grace Denno
Gwen Wright
Jerome Fletcher
Judy Stephenson
Julio Murillo
Laurie Boyer, CECD
Scott Pomeroy

MCEDC Staff:

Ben Seigel
Bill Tompkins
Brad Stewart
Christy Blake
Kristin O'Keefe

MCEDC President & CEO Ben Wu, the Commerce Cabinet Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm. A quorum of the Commerce Cabinet members was present. Ms. Blake was designated to take minutes.

Mr. Wu opened the meeting with a modification on the scheduled agenda given that an emergency County Council meeting on the relaxation of business reopening restrictions would begin at 1:30pm. Accordingly, Mr. Wu reordered the agenda and asked Kristin O'Keefe and Brad Stewart to kick off the meeting.

Initiative Update: Public-Private Marketing Partnership

Ms. O'Keefe and Mr. Stewart presented content and strategies of possible areas of economic development emphasis in a future Montgomery County marketing and branding campaign that would

be supported by a Public-Private Marketing Partnership. Key presentation points, with a particular focus on life sciences as an example, included:

- Amount of \$ of investment in life sciences in Montgomery County;
- Local industry work in the research, development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines, specifically Novavax, Emergent Biosciences, and other companies; and
- Montgomery County companies on Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing list.

Ms. O’Keefe also presented on current marketing messaging, target audience and media sharing. Mr. Stewart presented on key industry sectors, the work of the MCEDC business development team to develop attraction opportunities, and recent examples of business growth and expansion successes.

Part of a marketing and branding strategy includes helping to change the narrative about Montgomery County’s business friendliness. Towards that end, MCEDC sponsored with Bisnow a webinar about reforms being made by the Department of Planning to expedite the planning process. There are expected to be additional future webinars focusing on similar reform efforts in permitting and procurement. Mr. Wu asked Mr. Anderson to provide an overview of Planning’s announced “Speed to Market” Initiative.

Mr. Anderson was joined by Ms. Wright and gave an overview of the Speed to Market Initiative. Mr. Anderson reported that there has not been a decrease in development applications during the pandemic and received more than usual. Mr. Wu reported that the “Speed to Market” Initiative is another opportunity that can be used to change the perception of how Montgomery County prioritizes business development. There is a desire to aggregate these reform measures in a public-private marketing campaign to demonstrate the holistic transformations that are currently being undertaken.

Initiative Update: Unified Impact Project on Downtown Silver Spring

The last Commerce Cabinet meeting introduced 15 different potential activities to support economic development in Silver Spring. With Cabinet input and consideration, there seemed to be consensus to focus on four specific activities in this initiative. Mr. Seigel gave an update on the status and presented on these four activities in a Unified Impact Project on Downtown Silver Spring:

- Craft Brewery/Foods Arts District
- Climate Change/Clean Tech Hub
- Assistance for Homeless Population
- Small Minority Women-Owned Business Enterprise Procurement Initiative

Following Mr. Seigel’s presentation, Mr. Wu opened the discussion specifically regarding the potential procurement initiative. Mr. Shetty gave an overview of some of their current procurement practices that relate to the proposed initiative.

Mr. Wu asked for discussion to determine consensus for moving forward with the initiatives, stating that if there were consensus, the Commerce Cabinet would have Mr. Seigel begin to advance the four initiatives towards implementation.

- Ms. Margolies stated that most of the initiatives are in line with what Planning has been working on and that the department is working on a visioning exercise in the coming weeks, as part of its work on developing a Silver Spring Master Plan.

- Mr. Nigam asked what would be the financial ask from the County for the arts and brewery project, stating that this should be a priority. Mr. Wu said that a request would be made to the County Executive and the County Council and that there would also be possible funding opportunities explored from both federal and state sources as well, especially with the recent passage of the American Rescue Act into law and potential adoption of the Governor's budget by the General Assembly.
- Mr. Dise said the County has spent a lot of money in Silver Spring to improve quality of life and business climate; the Department of General Services is in the process of purchasing a building and turning it into a shelter and expressed a desire to work together to address community issues.

Mr. Wu stated that if the Commerce Cabinet is comfortable with the four Downtown Silver Spring initiatives, Mr. Seigel would be authorized to move forward on creating a specific action plan and potential funding sources for each of the initiatives to be presented at the next meeting. There were no objections.

Initiative Update: Support of Montgomery County Economic Recovery Strategies

Mr. Tompkins reported that on March 2, 2021 Councilman Friedson introduced a bill, Council bill 10-21, to delegate the responsibility of creating the Montgomery County comprehensive economic development strategy to MCEDC from the County Executive. The bill is supported by the County Executive. MCEDC is putting together an industry-led advisory panel that is taking a preliminary look at developing an action plan that could provide a foundation for a future comprehensive economic development strategy if the bill were to be enacted. Mr. Tompkins stated that MCEDC will continue to keep the Commerce Cabinet aware of updates and the status of the legislation.

Initiative Update: Economic Development Regulatory Reform Initiative

Mr. Wu stated that he believes the advisory panel Mr. Tompkins referenced would further support the need for a regulatory reform initiative. Mr. Wu asked that all Commerce Cabinet members who have not yet submitted the requested information to Ms. Blake to please do so. The requested information include: agency staff POC, regulatory reform activities currently being undertaken and highlighted areas that require regulatory reform attention.

Mr. Wu moved to approve the meeting minutes from the last Commerce Cabinet meeting held on January 8, 2021. Mr. Dise motioned for approval; Ms. Pedeem seconded the approval.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 2:50 PM.