

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMERCE CABINET
FRIDAY, MAY 14, 2021
MEETING MINUTES**

Attendance

Commerce Cabinet Members:

Casey Anderson
Chris Conklin
Anthony Featherstone
Jerome Fletcher
Kelly Groff
Aseem Nigam
Adam Ortiz
Mitra Pedoeem
Richard Madeleno
Benjamin Wu

Guests:

Laurie Boyer
Grace Denno
Julio Murillo
Scott Pomeroy
Judy Stephenson

MCEDC Staff:

Nadia Khan
Ben Seigel
Bill Tompkins

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. Khan was designated to take minutes.

Mr. Wu moved to approve the meeting minutes from the prior Commerce Cabinet meeting held on March 12, 2021. Ms. Pedoeem motioned for approval; Mr. Nigham seconded the approval.

Mr. Wu opened the meeting by noting that the schedule would be shorted to one hour, and that going forward, this would generally be the norm to accommodate Cabinet members' schedules.

Initiative Update: Support of Montgomery County Economic Recovery Strategies

Mr. Wu provided an update on MCEDC's Economic Advisory Panel of business executives co-chaired by Mr. Norm Augustine and Dr. DeRionne Pollard. The panel was created to review past Montgomery County economic development strategies and to offer priorities for execution. The panel outcome is to develop an industry-led consensus action plan that can strengthen Montgomery County's economic future. The panel recently concluded its second meeting to develop an action plan that will provide a foundation for creating a future comprehensive economic development strategy that has been tasked to MCEDC by the County Council.

Mr. Madeleno inquired as to whether Dr. Pollard would need to be replaced as a Co-Chair due to her recent appointment as head of Nevada State College. Mr. Wu indicated that he had not spoken with Dr. Pollard directly, but he believed that there would be no need to seek a replacement since the panel was convening for a limited purpose and duration and Dr. Pollard had indicated her commitment to the Economic Advisory Panel initiative.

Initiative Update: Customer Service Initiative

Mr. Wu advised that the RFP has not moved forward due to information that is still forthcoming from the departments which must be aggregated.

Initiative: Regulatory Reform

Mr. Wu indicated that this initiative needs to be further developed in conjunction with the Commerce Cabinet members. While most departments have provided points of contacts, some agencies still need to provide theirs.

Initiative Update: Public-Private Marketing Partnership

Mr. Wu indicated that this initiative is under development, and a campaign is targeted to be initiated in the Fall as the county begins to reopen and fall into a greater sense of normalcy; from a media and advertising perspective this timing would be more impactful.

Initiative Update: Unified Impact Project on Downtown Silver Spring

Mr. Siegel presented on the following developments and initiatives related to this project:

- Craft/Brewery District

Mr. Siegel noted that the goal of the Craft & Brewery tour is to drive additional foot traffic to the downtown Silver Spring Area. This will occur by leveraging the existing arts walk and the high concentration of microbreweries located along the route. The project would extend the existing arts walk along Georgia Avenue while incorporating additional signage, crosswalk repair, and lighting in key areas of need. There is some discussion as to the possibility of incorporating public art near the Georgia Avenue overpass tunnel to celebrate African American history in the region.

Mr. Siegel has engaged the three micobreweries in the area and received positive feedback about the concept and interest in partnership around joint marketing/special events. Mr. Siegel will meet with the microbreweries during the following week to secure commitments from them in these areas.

Mr. Pomeroy advised that the BRT project along Route 29 will have two kiosks in downtown Silver Spring which can be used to publicize information about the arts/brewery walk.

Mr. Siegel noted that some thought has been given to a potential workforce development initiative in partnership with Montgomery College. This would include customized training for small-scale manufacturing and brewing techniques as needed by the anchor microbreweries.

Mr. Anderson suggested that the walking trail should give consideration to the Metropolitan Branch Trail. Additionally, he noted that there may be some available amenities funds which Ms. Wright manages that could be looked at in conjunction with this project.

A suggestion was made to encourage some of the farm breweries in the Agricultural Reserve to participate in pop-up style events along the walking route. Ms. Groff shared a link for Visit Montgomery's TasteMaker's Trail to highlight possible participants.

Mr. Wu suggested that this initiative is expected to be targeted for FY22 funding.

- Climate Change Corridor

Mr. Siegel noted that this is an aspirational project to position downtown Silver Spring as a business cluster that can address climate change. While this is not a short-term project, it would be a long-term play with the potential to be transformative for economic development in downtown Silver Spring.

The primary draw is the existing NOAA Silver Spring headquarters. Additionally, the County has advanced an ambitious climate action plan particularly around building performance standards that could be activated in downtown Silver Spring. The White House also has an ambitious new climate taskforce as well. Mr. Siegel is presently working with the County to contact NOAA and assess partnership interest as well as the agency's space needs post-pandemic. Mr. Siegel noted that there could also be a component of inviting businesses into the downtown for contractor bid events or for meeting/incubator space.

Mr. Ortiz expressed his strong support for this effort. He noted though that "Climate Change Corridor" is not an apt name for the project since climate change is generally perceived as a negative outcome. He suggested incorporating "climate resiliency" or "clean tech" in the title instead. Mr. Ortiz also encouraged the group to partner with the Montgomery County Green Bank, which coordinates a variety of business financial services for energy retrofits and community and rooftop solar.

- Funding Updates

A congressional request for federal funding in the amount of \$300,000 was made through Congressman Raskin's office to the House Committee on Appropriations. The request was not specific as to how the budget would be allocated. Mr. Wu noted that if the request is approved, the hope is to work with members of the Senate to pass that body and to have it survive conference.

- Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce (GSSCC) Engagement

Mr. Siegel discussed a letter from the GSSCC highlighting several requests related to quality of life and public safety. Mr. Siegel noted that Mr. Dize offered to attend a GSSCC meeting to discuss comfort stations and obtain chamber input on appropriate locations and maintenance schedules. Mr. Wu noted that he appreciated the chamber's feedback, and that the Cabinet would take the requests under advisement and reach back out for subsequent discussion.

New Business

A discussion was held regarding the next scheduled Commerce Cabinet meeting, scheduled for July 9, 2021. Mr. Madeleno recommended that the Commerce Cabinet should plan an in-person meeting and suggested that it be held at the new Wheaton government center which opened during the pandemic.

Ms. Pedoeem volunteered to assist with logistics. Additionally, Mr. Madeleno requested that Ms. Judy Costello of the County Executive's Office be formally added to the Cabinet mailing list.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 2:00 PM.