

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMERCE CABINET

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2020

MEETING MINUTES

Attendance

Commerce Cabinet Members:

Tiffany Ward
Marlene Michaelson
Aseem Nigam
Mitra Pedoeem
Christopher Conklin
Avinash G. Shetty
David E. Dise
Jeremy V. Criss
Kelly Groff
Casey Anderson
Benjamin Wu
Rich Madaleno

Guests:

Judy Stephenson
Grace Denno
David Kunes

MCEDC Staff:

Bill Tompkins
Christy Blake

MCEDC President & CEO Ben Wu, the Commerce Cabinet Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:06 pm. A quorum of the Commerce Cabinet members was present. Ms. Blake was designated to take minutes.

Chair Update and Development of Potential Commerce Cabinet Initiatives

Mr. Wu opened the meeting with review of the five potential Commerce Cabinet initiatives that had emerged from previous meetings and discussions. These initiatives would be the main subjects for discussion at today's meeting with the goal of ~~achieving a consensus to collectively move forward.~~

The five potential Commerce Cabinet initiatives are:

1. Organizational Support of Montgomery County Economic Recovery Strategies
2. Creation of the Montgomery County Economic Development Customer Service Initiative
3. Creation of the Montgomery County Economic Development Regulatory Reform Initiative
4. Creation of the Montgomery County Public-Private Marketing Partnership
5. Development of a Commerce Cabinet Economic Development Unified Showcase Location Impact Project: Downtown Silver Spring

Initiative Discussion: Support of Montgomery County Economic Recovery Strategies

Doug Firstenberg, Chair, Economic Advisory Group (EAG) gave a presentation on the report “Economic Roadmap to Recovery and Long-Term Success” that makes recommendations to guide the County’s recovery efforts. The EAG report was just publicly released just two days prior. As part of the report, the EAG announced four key objectives as the foundation for this long-term strategic effort for the County: (1) Developing and retaining a skilled talent pipeline for businesses, including offering retraining opportunities; (2) Reimagining economic development to compete in the future through improved governmental processes that support business growth and expansion, development and transportation, infrastructure growth, and expanding housing at all income levels; (3) Addressing awareness of, access to, and capital availability to help existing enterprises succeed and attract new business investment; and (4) Supporting key industry sectors critical to the county’s economy and quality of life, including restaurants, entertainment, and hospitality.

Initiative Discussion: Economic Development Customer Service Initiative

In order to change the narrative about Montgomery County as a business unfriendly location, a customer service initiative is needed to address this misperception and to provide a framework to better address the County’s business engagement among the economic development-related departments. Ms. Pedoeem gave an overview of the Department of Permitting Services Customer Support and Outreach Division; how the department changed, the implementation of training for customer response, change concerning the perception of the department, and supports the customer service initiative created for small business.

Mr. Wu stated that the Commerce Cabinet will look at enhancing the customer service experience for Commerce Cabinet member departments. Mr. Wu also reported that MCEDC will seek funding support to put out an RFP to carry out this initiative.

Initiative Discussion: Economic Development Regulatory Reform Initiative

Mr. Wu will be asking Commerce Cabinet members to inventory their regulatory reform issues and actions as part of the Regulatory Reform Initiative to identify and address concerns with overly burdensome regulations. Commerce Cabinet members will be asked to help identify regulatory concerns and highlight successful reform efforts by sharing best practices and examples in their department.

Initiative Discussion: Public-Private Marketing Partnership

Mr. Wu introduced an initiative to create a public-private partnership to create a strategic marketing initiative for the County. This initiative will seek to help with branding efforts for the County and for County initiatives. MCEDC will begin the process of creating a formal P3 marketing structure.

Initiative Discussion: Unified Showcase Location Project on Silver Spring

To showcase the interagency coordination abilities of the Commerce Cabinet, a specific Montgomery County location will be targeted for attention and improvement. The plan would be for the showcase location to be selected and changed every 6-12 months as needed. Silver Spring is the inaugural location.

Mr. Wu reported that the intent of the Silver Spring initiative is to take a showcase location to help redefine and improve economic development initiatives in a key location. Mr. Wu stated that Silver Spring was chosen the first location for such initiative due to its importance, its immediate needs, its Purple Line development, its Opportunity Zones, and its diverse demographics and business make-up.

Councilman Tom Hucker Chief of Staff David Kunes gave an overview of pressing issues in Silver Spring. Mr. Kunes stated that he would like to tackle the misconception that Silver Spring has “arrived” by potentially addressing ongoing issues in Silver Spring, such as commercial development barriers, safety concerns and perceptions, as well as homelessness and housing initiatives.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 3:08 pm.