

RHODE ISLAND COMMERCE CORPORATION

MEETING OF THE LONG-TERM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING COUNCIL

PUBLIC SESSION

April 19, 2022

The Rhode Long-Term Economic Development Planning Council (“EDPC”) met on April 19, 2023 at the Department of Administration (1 Capitol Hill, Providence, RI 02908) pursuant to notice of the meeting to all Members and public notice of meeting, a copy of which is attached hereto, as required by applicable Rhode Island Law.

The following Members were present and participated throughout the meeting as indicated: Elizabeth M. Tanner, esq (Chair); David Chenevert; Channavy Chhay; Andrew Cortes; Pamela Cotter; Elizabeth Dwyer; Rilwan Feyisitan Jr.; Shannon Gilkey; Lori Giuttari; Philip Gould; Russ Griffiths; Roberta Groch; Steven King; Elizabeth Lynn; Bernadette MacArthur; Carol Malysz; Jason Martesian; Oscar Mejias; Lisa Ranglin; Loren Spears; Kira Wills. Not attending were: Mario Bueno; Elizabeth Catucci; Jane Cole; Roshni Darnal; Travis Escobar; James Thorsen; Krystafer Redden; Michael Sabitoni.

Chair Tanner presided over the meeting assisted by Daniela Fairchild, Adam Isaacs-Falbel, and Patrick Duffy of RI Commerce as well as Lindsay Johnson, Dan Gundersen, and Rachel Selsky of Camoin Associates.

Members of the public consisted of Rele Abiade, Lisa Carnevale, Christian Cowan, Alan Krinsky.

The meeting was called to order at 8:39am.

Secretary Tanner opened the meeting and introduced the council to the long-term economic development strategy and vision process, which aligns with the process of submitting the state’s next Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). Following a round of introductions of all of the council members present, Secretary Tanner introduced the team from Camoin Associates that has been contracted to assist the Executive Office of Commerce and Commerce Corporation with the development of the long-term strategy.

Dan Gundersen of Camoin Associates provided an overview of the role of the council, which is to provide guidance on the development of the plan and to approve the final plan. Mr. Gundersen outlined the history and process of the CEDS and what needs to be addressed in the plan in order to check the boxes for federal approval. These include:

1. Equity
2. Recovery and resilience
3. Workforce

4. Manufacturing
5. Tech-based economic development
6. Environmentally sustainable development
7. Exports and foreign direct investment (FDI)

Mr. Gundersen explained that states should include their own priorities in addition to the seven outlined by EDA. As for the format of the plan itself, it must include the following:

1. Data-based summary of what is going on in the area covered by the CEDS
2. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)
3. Action plan, including the entity that will take charge on the actions
4. Evaluation and performance metrics

Rachel Selsky of Camoin Associates asked that the committee make sure to take the information back to their communities and ensure fluid conversations. Ms. Selsky emphasized that committee members are trusted representatives of their communities, so they should be advocates and champions for this effort and play a role in supporting the implementation of the plan once it is complete.

Lindsay Johnson of Camoin Associates summarized the timeline of the project for the committee. Ms. Johnson explained that Camoin is currently concluding their data and economic analysis phase. Additionally, the stakeholder engagement phase will be wrapped up in the first week of May – the team has already had over a dozen focus groups and will be doing one-on-one interviews. At the June meeting of the council, committee members will have a chance to review some of the draft strategies drawn out through this process. There will be a public comment period during early- to mid-June, during which time the plan will also be taken to the General Assembly. The CEDS will be submitted to the EDA by the end of September. Following that, the state can begin looking into potential designation as an Economic Development District (EDD).

The meeting was then opened to the committee for reactions, comments, and questions:

Elizabeth Lynn asked if the state is already an EDD or if the EDD could be an outcome of the CEDS process. Daniela Fairchild answered that the designation as an EDD is a separate process after the CEDS is finished and that it could be an outcome as long as the CEDS mentions that possibility.

Kira Wills asked if there will be representation from people from the disabled community, the immigrant and refugee community, and the veterans community? Rachel Selsky and Daniela Fairchild answered that the team has been working to put together lists of people – including those in the named communities – to reach out to, and would love to hear recommendations from members of the committee.

Philip Gould asked about the data collection process. Rachel Selsky answered that Camoin has a series of proprietary data sources for baseline economic research, and will be doing targeted sector research on the five key industries in Rhode Island.

Lori Giuttari mentioned that the Rhode Island Foundation has recently completed a report based on focus groups on housing, the environment, jobs, etc. (Together RI). Suggested that the team pull from the RI Foundation report and what that group heard from stakeholders.

Oscar Mejias mentioned that a lot of things that members of the committee may want to say are already in other reports to use as a starting point. Rachel Selsky mentioned that the CEDS will be building off RI2030 and other recent work done in the state, pulling from that plan and building off the good work to go deeper for implementable actions.

Loren Spears asked if the team is using data to look at equity. For instance, data from the Census and groups like Rhode Island KidsCount that have synthesized data about equity, diversity, and those that are not being served in the economy. Daniela Fairchild responded that the team will be completing a one-on-one interview with Paige (from RI Kids Count) and will ask her what data pieces the CEDS should look at.

Rachel Selsky added that the whole project is taking a big emphasis on equity, and mentioned that the subcontractor &Access is helping to do this and digging into what disinvested neighborhoods and populations need more investment.

Lori Giuttari asked about the goals of the process, and whether the state will be taking the recommendations of the report and implementing them. Dan Gundersen responded that the key is to outline and assess priorities to align with the new strategy. Roberta Groch added that the state has to show EDA annually how we are progressing and implementing recommendations. Secretary Tanner emphasized the importance of having actual action steps for what needs to be done with data and facts behind it.

Pamela Cotter recommended that the team look at the Transportation Equity Benefit Analysis for information and background.

Andrew Cortes emphasized the importance of building off of other plans that have completed analysis so as not to recreate the wheel. Pointed to Equal Employment Opportunity Apprenticeship plans as more to look at, especially with an equity lens.

Elizabeth Lynn inquired about the mission and vision behind the project and where that can be found. Rachel Selsky and Daniela Fairchild emphasized that the CEDS is based off the 2030 plan and the pillars set out as priorities for the Governor. Through this process, the CEDS team is looking to nest the actionable points recommended through the plan under the work done through the 2030 process, including a large number of stakeholder and community engagement sessions.

Channavy Chhay requested that the Council have table tents for next time with names and titles so the council members can best get to know each other.

Rachel Selsky asked the council: what are some critical issues related to economic development in the state and what are some areas that you think the CEDS should focus on?

- Channavy Chhay pointed out accessibility.

- Steven King pointed out that the Quonset Development Corporation business park is getting full and that the state otherwise is constrained for growth in the industrial field.
- Lisa Ranglin said that the state of the education system is really concerning and that the state needs to have strong pipeline for the workforce.
- Loren Spears pointed out that workforce development must fit the needs of the workforce moving forward to 2030 and beyond (e.g., jobs in the green economy or blue economy). The state must look at the jobs that are coming and the entrepreneurial nature of the state.
- Kira Wills said that she was looking for engagement from corporations and existing businesses to be much more direct with educational institutions, and the CEDS could outline how that could happen. She mentioned that this is happening in some places but not enough throughout the state.
 - Dave Chenevert pointed to RI Businesses for Better Education, which started recently, as an example of a group doing this.
- Carol Malysz said that we should make sure that our universities and colleges are not duplicating efforts, but each using their own strengths and understanding what each other are doing. She said an important question was “what does RI want to be and how can we get there?” given that the state has so much opportunity, but needs to organize that to become who it wants to be.
- Andrew Cortes pointed out the disproportionate impact on communities of color with requirements for postsecondary education for high-paying jobs. He said that registered apprenticeships can create paths to equitable access to higher education and that the plan should focus on the accessible needs of the communities that have been excluded from economic progress.
- Lisa Ranglin said that it was refreshing to hear things that she would be saying and endorsed a starting point of equity. She said that equity will get us to where we haven’t been and looking at opportunities. She felt the focus areas outlined earlier in the meeting will help the state to look at the possibilities and how to lift all communities.
- Rilwan Feyisitan Jr. pointed out housing and healthcare as things that keep him up at night. If the state doesn’t have healthy housing stock and a healthy workforce, those are significant gaps.
 - Loren Spears added transportation, saying that the bus system is inadequate for people that live in the small towns surrounding the urban areas.
- Oscar Mejias said that learning and understanding the real needs of the community — not assuming that the needs of minority communities are known — is necessary to make economic development successful. He suggested using community organizations to reach out and hear about the real needs of the community from an economic point of view.
- Kira Wills said that the team must engage the previously incarcerated community, given that the high rate of recidivism plays a role in entrepreneurship and engagement with education. She pointed out that Rhode Island has the fourth largest rate in the country of people on probation.
 - Dave Chenevert added that RIMA started training program at prisons, which was stopped due to COVID but has now restarted. This helps in getting people solid jobs, including 15-20 companies that have started to hire people from this

program. This does mean that we need housing for people joining the workforce, because otherwise they have nowhere to go.

- Lori Giuttari said that almost 92%+ of business revenue comes from small businesses, so the small business community can build strong relationships by interacting with education and understanding what is happening in their communities. She also pointed out that small businesses grew during the pandemic but that they now have to deal with paying back EIDL and other pandemic assistance.
- Channavy Chhay said that she was concerned that we are building the ship thinking but that everybody can get on but that is not the case because it is so far away. People that are supposed to benefit from the system are getting left behind while the people building the ship are still doing well. This gets to the need of accessibility in the community. She said she has had experience with this type of planning process before, but that the ship built always benefits those on top.
- Commissioner Shannon Gilkey said that the state is not asking enough of our colleges and universities, which can have impacts on raising family income, workforce development and apprenticeships, and technology transfer and R&D – we don't have a collective infrastructure to work across our higher education ecosystem to allow for at-scale research and economic development, like some other states do. Commissioner Gilkey also pointed out that business succession and legacy planning are important issues and pointed out that higher education should be considered to help with this.
- Secretary Tanner recognized Christian Cowan and Polaris MEP, which published an advanced manufacturing report that showed that many of our manufacturing businesses are quite old and are led by older people. Secretary Tanner said that she is working with Dave Chenevert and Christian Cowan about ways to approach that issue (e.g., child, cooperative, other options).
- Pamela Cotter pointed out that business succession planning also gets to resiliency point – should consider what the state has as collective resources that can get people past tough times.
 - Secretary Tanner cited a stat from the SBA that 90% of businesses that experience some sort of disaster close within 5 years.
- Lisa Ranglin pointed out the huge opportunity for the untapped community in business succession planning – look at how to move from a very white community to more diversified ownership, including training future owners through the colleges and university. She said that it is important to map where we have aging owners in industry and consider how we skill up the untapped community to be business owners. Too often we go back to the same well, which does not include communities of color. Communities of color are available and ready, but need support to be able to scale up. Through this process, we think about how to be more intentional with data mapping of our current state into the desired state.
 - Commissioner Shannon Gilkey responded that RIOPC does higher education attainment profiles, broken down by race for all 39 communities, which show huge disparities. These provide a baseline understanding that could be helpful for data analysis, in order to see where postsecondary attainment is happening.

- Kira Wills tied together previous comments by Channavy Chhay, Lisa Ranglin, and Oscar Mejias, saying that they tie together as cultural competency. She said that there needs to be an assessment of cultural competency other than cultural awareness. She suggested that the Council discuss their understanding of cultural competency, because if we don't have baseline foundation of what that should be, all we will have is models of groups, which is not representative.
- Dave Chenevert brought the conversation back to succession planning, saying that if companies don't have succession plan, the state will lose these businesses and lose the intellectual knowledge of people who are in those positions as they age out. To remedy this, the state needs to do more in investing in their CTE program. He pointed out the state's historical deficiency in underinvesting in this aspect of education, especially compared to Massachusetts.
 - Commissioner Shannon Gilkey echoed the sentiment about what is lost without succession and legacy planning and a talent pipeline.
- Channavy Chhay said that in order to move the economy forward, we have to take an approach of employee ownership/share program so that employees can reap the benefits. In many cases, the majority of employees are minorities and know how to do the job, but could be out of job if a business or organization closes due to no succession plan.
- Loren Spears and Bernadette MacArthur pointed out that childcare is a huge barrier for employment and workforce.

Rachel Selsky invited public comment and other closing thoughts from the Council.

- Alan Krinsky of the Economic Progress Institute said that the state should think about local investments like those mentioned in the RI Foundation Make it Happen report to fund local and neighborhood trusts. He mentioned Jessica David with Local Return as a good resource for this conversation. Alan additionally said that the broad idea of economic development too often pins owners and employees against one another in a zero sum game.

Lindsay Johnson offered next steps for the Council and a preview of upcoming meetings. The next meeting of the Council will take place on May 17th.

Meeting adjourned at 9:56am.

RHODE ISLAND
Executive Office of Commerce

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING COUNCIL
PUBLIC NOTICE OF MEETING

A meeting of the Economic Development Planning Council will be held on April 19, 2023 beginning at 8:30 a.m. at the Rhode Island Department of Administration, 1 Capitol Hill, Room 2A, Providence, RI 02908. The meeting will be held for the following purposes:

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks
2. Explanation of the Economic Development Planning Council's Role and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Process
3. Discussion of Critical Issues Affecting CEDS Development
4. Preview of Upcoming Long-Term Planning Process
5. Questions and Comments
6. Adjourn

This location is accessible to the handicapped. Those requiring interpreter services for the hearing impaired must notify the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation at (401) 278-9100 forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting. Also, for the hearing impaired, assisted listening devices are available onsite, without notice, at this location.

This notice shall be posted at the Office of the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, the Executive Office of Commerce, the State House, and by electronic filing with the Secretary of State's Office.

Posted on April 14, 2023

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