

Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation
Board of Directors Meeting
February 16, 2021
Via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

The following Directors were present:

Robby Brewer, Principal, Lerch, Early & Brewer (Chair)
Kevin Beverly, President & CEO, Social & Scientific Systems (Vice Chair)
Carmen Larsen, Aquas Inc. (Treasurer)
Anthony Featherstone, Executive Director, WorkSource Montgomery
Terry Forde, CEO, Adventist Healthcare
Angela Graham, President & CEO, Quality Biological
Matthew Lee, President & CEO at FASTech, Inc.
Dr. Sanjay Rai, SVP for Academic Affairs, Montgomery College
Ola Sage, CEO, CyberRx
Tien Wong, CEO, Lore Systems, Tech 2000, Opus8, Inc.
Jerome Fletcher, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Montgomery County (Ex-officio)
Andrew Friedson, Councilmember, Montgomery County (Ex-officio)

The following Director was absent:

Elana Fine, Chief Operating Officer, VWG Wealth Management (Secretary)

Other members of the public were present, consistent with the requirements of the Open Meetings Act and in accordance with the Corporation's Bylaws. A full list of participants is enclosed.

Board Chair Brewer called the virtual meeting to order at 8:33 am. A quorum of the Directors was present. Ms. Hardy was designated to take minutes.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Mr. Beverly moved to approve the Consent Agenda which included the minutes from the January 19, 2021 Board meeting as presented. Mr. Lee seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Strategic Economic Action Plan: Timeline & Next Steps

Ms. Miller provided an update on the staff's most recent activities related to the development of the proposed Economic Action Plan to synthesize past reports and recommendations towards a unified consensus strategy. Ms. Miller noted that the staff is in the process of reviewing the many economic development reports and studies developed over the last five years and updating the data as necessary. Ms. Miller noted that a draft report will be submitted to the currently created Advisory Panel at the end of March.

Business Development Report

Mr. Stewart discussed Horizon Therapeutics' just announced acquisition of Viela Bio and MCEDC's previous efforts to assist with the company's expansion in the county. Mr. Stewart referenced a recent article in the Washington Business Journal which highlighted the recent expansion of Aurinia Pharmaceuticals Inc that also focused on Montgomery County's significant momentum in life sciences attraction and growth.

Draft Bill - Economic Development Strategic Plan

Councilmember Friedson briefed the Board on his proposed legislation to transfer the responsibility for drafting the County's Economic Strategic (CES) Plan from the County Executive's office to MCEDC. He noted that the legislation would seek to solidify MCEDC's role in consolidating and streamlining the county's various economic development efforts. Councilmember Friedson discussed the proposed timeline and process noting that a new CES would be developed every four years. Updates to the plan would be conducted every two years. The County Executive would provide input on the plan before it is submitted to the Council for approval. Councilmember Friedson noted that he expects the legislation to be introduced in the next couple of weeks. Councilmember Friedson invited the Board to provide feedback.

Mr. Forde thanked Councilmember Friedson and expressed his support for the legislation.

President & CEO Report

Unemployment Rate

Mr. Wu reported that the county's unemployment rate fell to 5.7 percent in December; down from 9 percent in May. Mr. Wu drew comparisons to the state's unemployment rate of 6 percent, adding that the economic recovery for the state flows through the county due to its significant percentage of the state's GDP.

Life Sciences

Mr. Wu highlighted recent successes in the life sciences space and discussed the impact that Montgomery County companies have had in the production of COVID-19 vaccines, cell and gene therapies.

Economic Recovery

Mr. Wu discussed the uneven economic recovery that some sectors have experienced (e.g., hospitality, restaurants and retail) and noted MCEDC's efforts to address these areas through the development of the Economic Action Plan.

RELIEF Act

Mr. Wu reported that Governor Hogan recently signed the RELIEF Act into law, which will deliver more than \$1 billion in tax relief and economic stimulus to small businesses and state residents who have been impacted by the pandemic. Mr. Wu noted that MCEDC submitted a statement of support for the bill.

Messaging Strategies

Ms. O'Keefe discussed recent efforts to capitalize on the county's momentum in the life science space, promote the restaurant relief programs, and communicate how the county can build a stronger more resilient economy.

PHED Committee Report

Mr. Wu reported that the PHED Committee conducted a hearing to discuss the County's business assistance programs and referenced the Committee's report. Mr. Wu noted that the County provided \$65M in direct business assistance in 2020, the highest in the state and one of the highest in the region, if not the highest.

Restaurant Relief Fund Update

Mr. Tompkins provided preliminary data regarding Phase II of the Restaurant Relief Fund. Mr. Tompkins noted that the fund was oversubscribed by 100%. Additional \$5,000 payments will be made to Phase I

recipients that have reconfirmed their eligibility. Mr. Tompkins discussed the approval rates and the timeline for the distribution of payments, currently targeted for mid-March.

Global Pandemic Prevention and Biodefense Center

Mr. Wu reported that MCEDC is partnering with ConnectedDMV to help support the Global Pandemic Prevention and Biodefense Center. Mr. Wu noted that the State of Maryland has committed \$300K towards this initiative. The County is considering its support as well.

Commerce Cabinet: Downtown Silver Spring and Public-Private Marketing Partnership

Mr. Wu noted that one of the five Commerce Cabinet initiatives is focused on addressing and improving economic development issues in downtown Silver Spring. An update will be provided after the next bimonthly Commerce Cabinet meeting on March 12.

Mr. Wu also reported that another of the Commerce Cabinet initiatives is the creation of a Public-Private Marketing Partnership. MCEDC will establish this partnership structure to support the County's marketing, branding, and communications efforts to better support economic development activities and attraction. Additional details will be provided in the future.

Westat COVID-19 Business Impact Longitudinal Study Update

Martha Stapleton of Westat provided an overview of the Westat Longitudinal Study and discussed the scientific and technical rigor of the survey design which makes the data unique with significant research impact. Ben Kraft of Montgomery Planning presented preliminary survey results.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Larsen reviewed the financial statements for the periods ending December 31, 2020 and January 31, 2021.

Workforce Development Report

Mr. Featherstone discussed a bill currently in the General Assembly session introduced by Senator Rosapepe called the Post Jobs Crisis Act of 2021. The bill is designed to provide funding for workforce development efforts in Maryland. Mr. Featherstone reported that WorkSource Montgomery is working on its local plan for 2020-2024. Feedback on the plan will be solicited through surveys and stakeholder engagement sessions.

New Business

Mr. Forde discussed the COVID-19 vaccine rollout and noted that the supply chain is opening up significantly. Mr. Forde discussed challenges related to health equity.

Mr. Beverly reported that Governor Hogan issued a new grant program to support early childhood programs impacted by the pandemic. Mr. Beverly discussed Montgomery Moving Forward's efforts to establish a new an entity to manage the resources across the early childhood space. Mr. Beverly expressed his support for a public-private approach. Mr. Beverly will share additional resources with the Board on this topic.

Ms. Graham discussed the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) report on *Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Grant Programs* and inquired about whether the staff had applied any of the lessons learned to their administration of grants. Mr. Wu clarified that the focus of the OIG's report was non-MCEDC grant programs. Mr. Tompkins confirmed that the staff has incorporated the report's recommendation and other best practices.

Mr. Lee discussed issues related to the vaccine rollout, specifically the lack of access for translation services at vaccine sites. Mr. Forde offered to speak with Mr. Lee further offline.

Ms. Larsen inquired about the status of the OIG's inquiry regarding Board member sponsorships. Mr. Tompkins noted that the OIG is reviewing a complaint regarding MCEDC sponsorship of events conducted by Board member companies. Information responsive to the OIG's request has been submitted.

Ms. Larsen inquired about the process for welcoming new businesses to the County. Mr. Tompkins discussed the possibility of developing a more formal welcome package.

Ms. Sage raised the issue of the proposed Maryland Digital Ad Tax that was made law when the General Assembly recently overrode the Governor's veto. There is now an on-going legal challenge to the constitutionality of the new law in the judicial system. Mr. Wu suggested that the Board could engage in a discussion about the potential impact of the tax on Montgomery County businesses at a future Board meeting if the tax takes effect and the legal challenge has been resolved.

Mr. Brewer reminded Board members to submit their Conflict of Interest statements.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:33 am.

**MCEDC Board Meeting Attendees
February 16, 2021
Via Zoom**

1. Councilmember Andrew Friedson, Montgomery County Council
2. Brandon Bedford, MCEDC
3. Kevin Beverly, Social & Scientific Systems
4. Robby Brewer, Lerch, Early & Brewer
5. Ronald Daversa
6. Laurie Edberg, Montgomery County Government
7. Anthony Featherstone, WorkSource Montgomery
8. Jerome Fletcher, Montgomery County Government
9. Terry Forde, Adventist Healthcare
10. Angela Graham, Quality Biological
11. Stacey Hardy, MCEDC
12. Ben Kraft, Montgomery Planning
13. Carmen Larsen, Aquas Inc.
14. Matthew Lee, FASTech, Inc.
15. Sarah Miller, MCEDC
16. Kristin O'Keefe, MCEDC
17. Susan Prince, Rockville Economic Development, Inc
18. Dr. Sanjay Rai, Montgomery College
19. Ola Sage, CyberRx
20. Gene Smith, Montgomery County Government
21. Martha Stapleton, Westat
22. Brad Stewart, MCEDC
23. Bill Tompkins, MCEDC
24. Benjamin Wu, MCEDC