

Howard County Economic Opportunity and Prosperity Task Force

Economic Development Subcommittee Meeting

Columbia/Ellicott Room – Howard Building – April 26, 2018

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. The following individuals were in attendance: Ali Abidi, Jay Parekh, Larry Twele, Peter O’Neil, Melissa Metz, Bitu Dayhoff, Roger Barnes, and Jeff Meyers (Council staff). Also attending via teleconference were Phyllis Madachy, Leonardo McClarty.

The minutes from February 28, 2018, and March 28, 2018 were approved unanimously.

Mr. O’Neil encouraged the subcommittee members to think about the subcommittee’s focus in light of the goals of addressing fairness and promoting social engagement. The subcommittee discussed workforce needs in the County including cybersecurity and various allied and supporting jobs. The subcommittee discussed ways of addressing the workforce shortage and the various barriers to becoming part of that workforce. Some barriers are appropriate and affordable training, the availability and expense of childcare, and inadequate public transportation. Some of those barriers could be addressed by State and County government but could also be addressed by business. Mr. Twele agreed to invite Francine Trout of the Office Workforce Development to address the subcommittee.

The government might offer loans or grants and coordination to the business community to encourage innovative solutions to address those barriers. The government should also evaluate the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, minimum wage laws, mandatory leave requirements, and the Public Transportation Plan in light of their impacts on business and the ALICE workforce.

Mr. Barnes described his experience in helping small businesses that sought subcontracts on large projects. Many of the small businesses lack the capital needed to get through the first few months of a contract and there are few available bridge loan opportunities. The EDA has some loan money available but not all applicants are qualified for various reasons.

Ms. Dayhoff noted that there are opportunities for business to partner with social service agencies to recruit and train workers. The subcommittee discussed some of the issues involved in moving this concept forward including involvement of the State and County Apprenticeship initiatives.

Many subcommittee members seemed to favor having County purchasing preferences for local businesses. The County could also add contract requirements to mandate the employment or apprenticeship of County residents. Efforts such as these should consider unintended externalities.

The subcommittee considered how crime and the perception of crime affects business development and the safety of employees traveling to and from work using public transportation in the County.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.