Howard County Economic Opportunity and Prosperity Task Force

Minutes (Approved)

May 15, 2018

C. Vernon Gray Room
1st Floor, George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Members in attendance: Anne Brinker, Paul Casey*, Ana Cisneros*, Maddy Halbach, Jason Jannati*, Phyllis Madachy, Leonardo McClarty, Elizabeth Noble*, Gopi Suri*, and Lawrence Twele. Additionally, Peter O'Neil, Cindy Parr, Elizabeth Kromm*, and Linda Gilmore* from subcommittees also attended.

Staff in attendance: Jim Meyd, County Auditor's Office, Jeff Meyers, County Council office, John Gwynn, Office of Law, and Jessie Keller, Council Member Weinstein's office.

The audio recording of the meeting is available on the Task Force website[1].

Chairperson Madachy called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. The first item of business pertained to July 9 public hearing and whether or not to change the date. Ms. Madachy explained her reasoning behind not changing the date as it would force the group to focus on a preliminary set of recommendations for community feedback. She also discussed a working document that Ms. Halbach had prepared to show some of the common themes, "pillars", that had been identified to date. It was further mentioned that subcommittees should soon shift from data gathering to analysis so that recommendations might be formulated in a timely manner.

Mr. McClarty noted that the term "workforce housing" is understood in a number of different ways and that the Task Force may wish to clarify the meaning if any recommendations include the term.

At its June meeting, the Task Force will hear from Lisa B. Terry, manager of the Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families. Mr. McClarty noted that the Task Force may wish to hear from a subject matter expert related to the immigrant population. He had met with representatives of the Indian Origin Network (ION) of Howard County to learn about some of the business-related issues faced by ION's members. Other immigrant groups may face similar issues but how those issues are addressed may vary based on cultural norms.

No speakers are planned for the July Task Force meeting so that the Task Force can discuss the preliminary thoughts and recommendations from the various subcommittees. Ms. Halbach suggested

that each subcommittee prepare for the Task Force a list of the speakers it has heard from and documents that it found useful.

Mr. O'Neil reported that the Economic Development subcommittee had met in April and held a broad discussion that covered workforce needs, transportation, childcare, and apprenticeships. At its next meeting, the subcommittee will hear from Fran Trout, Linda Gilmore, and Emmet Tydings[2]. Ms. Halbach noted that the Education and Workforce Development subcommittee also wished to hear from Ms. Trout and suggested a joint meeting.

Ms. Halbach reported that the Education and Workforce Development subcommittee met last month, though without a quorum. The meeting included discussions of apprenticeships, dual enrollment, cost of college and associated debt, financial literacy, and ways of getting information to target populations. Ms. Halbach had assigned readings to the subcommittee members. She indicated that the subcommittee wished to hear from Lisa Terry, Becky Bowman, Laurie Rubin, Lori Lilly, and Bill Chenowith.

Ms. Brinker reported that the Housing and Community Development subcommittee met 3 times since the last Task Force meeting and heard from a number of speakers on fair housing, senior housing, and the arts. At its next meetings, the subcommittee will hear speakers on immigration and the environment.

Steve Sachs, the Chair of the Howard County Spending Affordability Committee briefed the Task Force on the Committee's activities and recommendations[3]. The Committee is highly diverse and broadly representative of various populations and interests in the County but wishes to add representatives from the farming and non-profit sectors. Mr. Sachs noted that the Committee is not only interested in the numbers, but the demographics behind the numbers. The County is maturing with lower growth rates yet the County's residents' wants exceed the County's capacity to provide, so efficient and creative solutions must be found. The Committee recommended less borrowing than it has in the past and recommend both an increase in the transfer tax and the addition of an ambulance fee. The Committee also recommended a thorough study of the impacts of the recent APFO legislation.

Mr. Sachs noted that the majority of the County's budget is devoted to education, but that is only one reason why businesses and people move to the County. Thus housing needs must be addressed. Also, most households do not have school age children as the over-65 cohort is growing rapidly.

Changes in development patterns have resulted in slower growth to the property tax base, which means the County will be less able to withstand the next economic downturn.

Mr. McClarty noted the County's obligation to pay for several costly projects like the Court House and the Jail. Ms. Halbach noted that increasing class size leads to higher costs for text books and technology. Mr. Sachs discussed how the school system might have avoided some of the issues that it now faces and

---

[2] Agenda: https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=poHK_8j392c%3d&tabid=490&portalid=0
[3] Committee materials are here: https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/County-Administration/Budget/Spending-Affordability-FY-2019

some of the gaps in education as it is now practiced. Ms. Brinker noted that early intervention is more effective that trying to teach older children coping strategies.

Mr. McClarty noted that creativity and innovation sometime only arise in the face of a crisis, which the County does not now face. Mr. Sachs stressed the need for nimbleness and coordination in addressing the County's issues.

The Task Force approved the minutes from its meeting on April 9, 2018, and from the hearing also on April 9.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.