

Howard County Economic Opportunity and Prosperity Task Force

Economic Development Subcommittee Meeting

Columbia/Ellicott Room – Howard Building – August 9, 2018

Minutes

The meeting began at 3:124 p.m. The following individuals were in attendance: Peter O’Neil, Melissa Metz, Larry Tweele, Leonard McCarty (by phone) and Jeff Meyers (Council staff).

As there was no quorum, the minutes from April 26 and May 31 were not considered. Minutes from July 2 are not yet available.

The subcommittee discussed possible areas for recommendations. Not all recommendations need to be about creating new programs, recommendations could encourage the continuation of activities already in place.

The subcommittee thought there may be room for improvement in efforts to move the under-employed to better employment. The subcommittee also thought expanding apprenticeships would be useful.

The Economic Development Authority devotes most of its attention to helping existing businesses because those are the ones most likely to seek out EDA help and also because doing so is more effective than dealing with startups. Other entities have programs for startups, e.g., HCC and Goldman Sachs. Typically, businesses seek help in finding space, land, and financing. Financing for startups is risky and should not be a governmental activity.

The subcommittee encourages master planning efforts, both for Gateway and other development areas and for the County General Plan. Land use should be matched to the County’s needs.

The subcommittee believes that taxes and fees should be examined so that they align with the County’s needs and plans. The subcommittee recommends that a deep examination of all regulations affecting development, and the associated taxes and fees. The Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance also should be deeply examined so that all of the ramifications, including the economic costs/benefits of development, are well-understood.

Some of the issues facing businesses are State or federal burdens. The subcommittee sees the County as business-friendly and efficient. It may be useful to have a robust County purchasing preference for local businesses, but caution is needed to avoid unintended consequences. Some local businesses may need help in navigating the County purchasing system, in operating back office systems, and in improving some financial management capabilities.

The subcommittee also thought that it may be useful to look at the regulation of home-based businesses given the changing economy.

The meeting broke up at 4:35 p.m.