

## **MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD**

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The Economic Development Advisory Board of the City of Fort Myers, Florida, met in regular session at Oscar M. Corbin, Jr. City Hall, 2200 Second Street, its regular meeting place in the City of Fort Myers, Florida, on Thursday, March 4, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. Present were: Chair, Dennis Landfried, presiding, Vice Chair, Jerome Miller, and Regular Board Members, Ori Lee Ford, John Kakatsch, Roy Kennix (Arrived at 2:15 p.m.), Sharon Schulman, Ken Pariser, and Alternate Board Member Nannette Maxson and Duane Dyar. Also present were: Steven Belden, Community Development Director; Barbara Carr, Business and Economic Development Administrator; Grant Alley, City Attorney; Gwen Carlisle, City Clerk; and Jennifer Myers, Recording Specialist. Absent: None

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Landfried called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO FLAG AND ROLL CALL**

Chair Landfried led the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call was taken by Recording Specialist Myers.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** - None

### **PRESENTATIONS**

1. FIU Summary Outline – Building Corridors of Opportunity: Fort Myers Community Economic Development initiative (via Zoom)

Steven Belden, Community Development Director, stated that the presenters would like to gain input from the Board. He introduced Ned Murray, Florida International University (FIU) and Jonathan Romine, SecondMuse.

*Board Member Kennix arrived at 2:15 p.m.*

Ned Murray, Florida International University (FIU), gave a brief of summary of the purpose of the study; stakeholder roundtable product delivery; Competitive Assessment Report I – Key Findings; Target Areas and Plans; corridors vacant land analysis; Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard concept Area; US 41 and Colonial Boulevard Concept Area; Commercial Corridor Intersections, Infill Development, Gateways; Proposed Strategies; Top advanced industries by employment; and Top ten manufacturing industry groups. He noted that the next step is to complete a full draft of the report along with strategies.

Jonathan Romine, SecondMuse, reported that they conducted the community engagement portion of the study wherein they connected with over 100 people throughout the corridors to understand the residents and small business owner struggles. They wanted to find out the tools and resources that exist in the City to start a business and how those resources be continued. Mr. Romine mentioned that they are looking at different ways to create capital mechanisms with partnerships or organizations for local businesses to build resources. He stated that a person could be designated to help start new businesses and help it thrive. Mr. Romine noted that the Southwest Florida Enterprise Center could be reimaged to support neighborhood businesses or home-based businesses to become store fronts to help build physical development along the corridors. He mentioned that the City's population is diverse

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with many cultures and they are looking at what can be done to celebrate and elevate those cultures collectively rather than in silos. They looked at opportunities to create play space type of events, entrepreneur events, and small business events to represent the entrepreneurs of a neighborhoods. Mr. Romine mentioned that in the five-county region 90% of businesses are less than 20 employees and they are looking at ways to support micro-enterprises as well as larger businesses and how they can work together. Mr. Romine stated that there are a lot of short-term opportunities that can be implemented immediately to keep moving these conversations forward for the next phase of this effort.

Chair Landfried asked what the next phase will be for the FIU report. Mr. Belden stated that the final FIU report will outline short term, intermediate, and long-term goals in which the City will need to create a plan for implementation. He felt that all parties working on economic development should be brought together to build a formal organization so that each party can understand the other party and that all the resources can be used in the most efficient manner. Board Member Dyar asked when the next FIU draft will be available. Mr. Murray stated that they will be presenting the draft report to the City Council at a workshop on March 15, 2021 and the final report could be available shortly after that workshop.

Board Member Dyar mentioned it was in the report that zoning and land use strategies are the most effective and cost-efficient tools that a City has at its disposal to create special area plans. He asked if there will be additional information on that land use strategies and will there be examples from other cities that have had rezoning programs. Mr. Murray noted that zoning and land use is the best incentive tool to implement the objectives of an area plan and that the City of Miami is an example of its use. He stated that they will recommend in the report special area plans with flexibility wherein an Ordinance could be crafted to effectively stimulate the types of development activity that is outlined in the plan.

Board Member Kennix felt that there is a need for community-oriented venture capital for new businesses as qualifying for traditional banking is a challenge. He mentioned that several years ago they presented a proposal to the City suggesting the creation of a community development venture capital funding for new businesses, small or developed businesses, it could occupy a space at McCollum Hall, and offer \$50,000.00 to \$100,000.00 venture capital. He felt that there should be a conversation with the banking community asking what they could liberalize in their lending policies and practices. Board Member Kennix felt that it is critical to have entrepreneurial training program that targets start-ups and fledging business that still need support. He noted that there are emerging initiatives taking place currently at the federal government level to create Community Development Financial Institute (CDFI) venture capital entities that would be supported by the newly passed federal Coronavirus Stimulus Program which has singled out the need for the CDFI funds to be earmarked to target underserved minority communities. Board Member Kennix felt that all these issues should be tied together as a comprehensive strategy to make something different happen in the community with respect to economic development.

Mr. Belden stated the City is partnering with Goodwill where they offer citizens a Micro-Enterprise Entrepreneurship Training Program and, if they successfully complete the program, the City will provide them with startup funds of \$5,000.00 to \$10,000.00 from the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allocation. Mr. Murray noted that venture capital is an essential part of small business opportunities for startups, expansions, and COVID effects. They could identify tailored products and how local lenders, the Small Business Development Center, and other organizations can become part of that delivery

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system. Mr. Belden noted that the City has had conversations with different banks to invest in the community who advised that they are eager to participate, therefore, further engagement with them needs to take place. Board Member Kennix felt that alternative financial sources need multi-year equity venture capital for businesses. He noted that there was a Bank Enterprise Award (BEA) Program where CDFI offers banks grant funds if they make loans to disadvantage businesses.

Chair Landfried noted that Fort Myers is one of the fastest growing areas of the country and asked how infrastructure is addressed when putting together a plan for the growth in the corridors. Mr. Belden replied that it is an ongoing issue that the City addresses through a Comprehensive Plan, a Future Land Use (FLU) element, a utilities element, and compliance with a level of standards. He noted that a permit to build cannot be issued unless the capacity exists, or it will exist which also applies to transportation infrastructure as well. The City prepares for its projected growth needs in the near and distant future with every permit application. He noted that utility pipe replacement has been designed to be upsized to accommodate the future growth in the Midtown Vision Plan.

Board Member Ford suggested that the intended development plan be visualized to support the zoning changes. He recommended a plan to address connecting people who need jobs with the businesses who have jobs along with providing skill sets for the jobs. Mr. Belden stated that he has had that specific discussion with FIU and SecondMuse to address how to bring together existing businesses with people in the community by getting the individuals specific workforce training. Board Member Ford noted that prior to COVID a group met, with members from the Chamber of Southwest Florida, Lee County Electric Cooperative (LCEC), Business Network International (BNI) were discussing ways to make the connection, however, the initiative faded since COVID. He recommended having a meeting with Mr. Romine to discuss reviving that initiative. Board Member Ford suggested building a collaborative effort to make this plan work as there are plenty of individuals and organizations that want to engage.

Vice Chair Miller recommended a strategy to codify the vision plans which should include a budget to implement height and density code changes. He asked if they are picking areas to target for a specific industry or broadly looking at the City to see where an industry fits. Mr. Romine stated pre-COVID, geography would have been considered as well as physical spaces, however, since COVID switched more people to work from home, specifically in the tech industry, mixed-use is becoming more critical. Vice Chair Miller stated that currently developers are restructuring residential building plans to accommodate for home office space. Mr. Romine stated that manufacturing and industrial businesses will need a constrained geography spaces, however, technology, consulting, professional services, and food and beverages can easily overlap in a mixed-use space. Vice Chair Miller mentioned that post-COVID there appears to be an opportunity for technology start-up businesses. Mr. Romine noted that the startup business focuses will be on leveraging technology for other businesses since technology is involved in all business now. Vice Chair Miller recommended a City budget for economic development marketing. He suggested that screening or landscaping be created at I-75 and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (MLK) for a better vision coming into the City.

Board Member Kakatsch recalled Brad Lunn, Edison Mall General Manager, coming to the January 9, 2020 meeting to discuss possible options for the future of Edison Mall. He noted that there has not been any progress in the Sears vacancy and recommended that the Board

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follow up with Mr. Lunn. Mr. Belden mentioned that Sears is a separate entity from the Edison Mall which is challenging for the whole site. Board Member Kakatsch felt that the City and the community owes it to the Edison Mall to help them become successful. Board Member Ford noted that if the City had an Economic Development Department and Director their objective would be to retain the businesses that already exists in community and bring in business. He noted that the Edison Mall is a huge plot of real estate and is an ideal place for a new make-up of mixed development not just the traditional retail. Board Member Dyar stated similar locations have redeveloped spaces like the Edison Mall into call centers which provides the community with good paying jobs. Chair Landfried suggested that Mr. Lunn from the Edison Mall be invited to a meeting to discuss possibilities and progress. Mr. Belden stated that the City has had conversation with the Edison Mall management about residential units and a mixed-use environment.

Chair Landfried thanked the FIU presenters and asked for a follow-up draft when possible. He felt the Board has an obligation to ensure that the FIU Plan gets implemented. Mr. Belden stated that he will keep the Board posted on the FIU Report activity and moving forward.

### **REGULAR ITEMS**

2. Approve Minutes of the meeting held on February 4, 2021

**MOTION: Board Member Kakatsch moved to approve the Minutes of the February 4, 2021 Economic Development Advisory Board Meeting; seconded by Board Member Ford; motion carried unanimously.**

### **UPDATE TO CITY COUNCIL**

3. Discussion on the Board presentation to Council on February 16, 2021

Chair Landfried thanked the Board Members that attended the City Council Meeting on February 16, 2021 to give the presentation to the Council. Vice Chair Miller noted that the presentation to Council was a brief overview of the Board's focus items. He suggested that the Board needs to decide whether the presentations to Council will be focused on specific items or a broader view and how often to make presentations moving forward. Chair Landfried noted that he asked Mayor Anderson if there is something else that the Board should focus its efforts and Mayor Anderson recommended water quality, Homelessness Task Force, and infrastructure. Chair Landfried asked if the City has committed to a water study recently and Mr. Belden replied he will get that information. Board Member Miller stated that at the previous City Council meeting they approved hiring an outside environmental water consultant. Board Member Kakatsch asked for an update on hiring a new City Manager since he ties these things together. Mr. Belden stated that Council retained a consulting firm for the search of a City Manager. Richard Calkins, Information Technology Director, stated that he posted the City Manager position on the City website where the application is available through the end of March. Board Member Pariser suggested proposing to Council that they add an Economic Development Advisory Board item on their Agenda so that the Board can update the Council on its status at every meeting. Discussion ensued and Chair Landfried noted that the Board will attend Council meetings quarterly and will need to pick dates so that the dates are anticipated with preparation.

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### **BOARD MEMBER FOCUS AREAS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS**

#### 4. Discussion on creating a Disadvantaged Business Task Force

Chair Landfried noted this item was tabled at the last meeting to compile potential members of the task force. Board Member Ford stated that he needs more time to get confirmation from potential members. Vice Chair Miller asked if Board Member Ford is still working with the City Manager on the City's program. Board Member Ford stated that conversation is continuing, and Ms. Carr is involved as well. Vice Chair Miller noted that it may be delayed due to the City Manager retiring in May. Board Member Ford stated that it may not be finished before the City Manager retires, however, the Board can present what is established to the City Council. Vice Chair Miller stated that this item should be on the Board's next quarterly report to the City Council. Board Member Ford stated there should be a good idea of what to propose by then to Council. Chair Landfried asked if there needs to be an official list of the people who will be members of the committee. City Attorney Alley stated that if the Board wants to form a task force, the members need to be identified, a motion needs to be made to formally establish the task force. Chair Landfried stated that Board Member Ford is the Board's representative for the task force as there can only be one member from the Board on the task force due to the Sunshine Law and asked that he gather a list of members and bring it to the next Board meeting.

Chair Landfried noted that items of economic development importance already have committees created and recommended that this Board be represented at those meetings to report back to this Board so that it can have discussions that will create a result that can be presented to Council as a recommendation that will make a meaningful change. He stated that the goal is to take the Board's list of priorities and Council priorities and have one Board Member represented for each priority. Board Member Ford felt that the Board needs an active participating City Council liaison to speak on this Board's behalf and can introduce recommendations. Vice Chair Miller conveyed that the Board's quarterly scheduled Council meetings be specific and actionable presentations. Chair Landfried noted that he will contact the Board's liaison, Councilperson Burson, to ask him to attend the meetings and if he cannot, he will commit to contacting him after each of their meetings to update him on the Board's discussions.

Board Member Pariser suggested Board recommendation to Council should be that contractors bidding for City projects get extra points for hiring within the community and technical school students. He recommended that the Board meetings be publicly advertised in the media so that the public be given more notice and will attend.

***MOTION: Board Member Dyar moved that the Economic Development Advisory Board attend City Council meetings quarterly; seconded by Board Member Maxson; motion carried unanimously.***

Board Member Ford suggested that the Board's Agenda list the committees and the liaison. Board Member Schulman agreed to be involved in water quality and Mr. Belden stated that he will get her details on what that will include. Chair Landfried stated that there are task forces associated with some of the priorities and if there is not a task force, the Board needs to create one and get the appropriate people involved. Board Member Dyar asked if a committee or task force created by the Board will fall outside of the Sunshine Law. City

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Attorney Alley replied that if an advisory Board wants to create a sub-committee or task force which he recommends a sub-committee, he will be able to advise the Board whether the Sunshine Law applies. The process to establish the DBE Task Force would be to first define its scope of work, pick members, the Board must vote to create it, and then there can be meetings wherein a report will be brought back to the Board. Chair Landfried asked that Board Member Pariser be involved in the corridor planning and Mr. Belden replied that he will help him get connected to meetings associated with corridor planning. Chair Ford noted that local preference policy is included under the Board’s focus list under the Disadvantaged Business Ordinance.

Chair Landfried noted that Board Members have been selected as liaisons on the following committees who will then provide the Board with updates at each meeting and the sections will be listed on the Agenda under the Board Member Focus Areas, Comments and Concerns:

<b>Board Member Ford</b>	<b>DBE Task Force</b>
<b>Vice Chair Miller</b>	<b>Parks and Beautification Committee</b>
<b>Chair Landfried</b>	<b>Mayor’s Affordable Housing Task Force</b>
<b>Board Member Kennix</b>	<b>Affordable Housing and Homelessness Sub-Committee of the Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Task Force</b>
<b>Board Member Schulman</b>	<b>Water Quality</b>
<b>Board Member Pariser</b>	<b>FIU Corridor planning</b>

**MOTION:** *Board Member Ford moved to list all targeted focus area task groups as regular items on the Agenda, Board Member Pariser seconded; motion carried unanimously.*

**REPORTS**

6. Business and Economic Development Administrator’s Report

Ms. Carr discussed the FIU Stakeholder Meetings and noted that Board Member Schulman, Board Member Ford, and the Enterprise Center were in attendance. She noted that during the last month she met with Board Member Dyar to discuss the Economic Development website and the website has been opened wherein she welcomes any suggestions for improvements. Ms. Carr mentioned her discussions with Board Member Ford regarding the DBE Ordinance. She reported that she has been meeting with contractors/developers to think about future attraction to the area and finding out what needs they have and what they are looking at. She has been asked to speak at a commercial realtors’ event in May 2021. She visited the Southwest Florida Enterprise Center to see what spaces were available for rent and discussed with them a collaboration with the Fort Myers Technical College to build up student’s skills, progress their careers, and starting their own business. She will be speaking at the Enterprise Center to a Business-to-Business group this month. Ms. Carr stated that she participated in the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting which discusses transportation needs. A priority item was a pedestrian bicycle sidewalk in Ward 6 and she shared with them the construction happening in that area and finding a way of getting ahead of the growth. The Committee mentioned their discussion about the controlled delivery method created Downtown and felt it should be continued into the Midtown area. They discussed the need to include parking areas for freight and trucks to make pick-ups and drop-offs. She encouraged TAC to work on a second parallel runway at the airport for air cargo that is needed to support the commercial and industrial build-up in the area.

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Board Member Maxson asked for an update on the Red Sox Stadium. Mr. Belden reported that the County is planning to demolish the Red Sox Stadium this year and then turn the 30-acre block over to the City. Once the City has control of the property, a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be advertised for redevelopment starting with the Town Center of the Midtown Vision Plan. Board Member Miller noted that a consultant was hired by the City to look at possible sport venues. Mr. Belden stated that the consultant hired by the Council to look at sport related venues in that general area to incorporate into the Vision Plan as well as incorporate or redevelop the Skatium.

### **BOARD MEMBER FOCUS AREAS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS** (Continued)

Board Member Ford felt that the Board's Chair and Vice Chair elections should not have a yearly term limit and that the body should be able to vote to continue that person as Chair especially if they are working on specific projects as changing leadership in the middle can hurt a project. Board Member Ford suggested that the Board should have the authority to reelect a Chair or Vice Chair as this Board's projects take time to complete and it cannot be consistent if the leadership keeps changing. City Attorney Alley stated that the Board's Ordinance provides that the Chair and Vice Chair cannot have more than two consecutive terms. Under State Law, changing the terms of the ordinance would require a permission to advertise approved by Council and the new Ordinance be adopted by Council. Board Member Ford felt that it is worth going through the process to change the Ordinance. Vice Chair Miller felt that whether someone is Chair, Vice Chair or a Board Member, their voice is the same. Chair Ford stated that the future Board Members may not feel that all the voices are equal, and it may inhibit the functionality of the Board to get things done in the future. City Clerk Carlisle noted that the current Ordinance will be distributed to the Board for their review. Chair Landfried stated that the issue will be put on the next Agenda for discussion.

### **NEXT MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT - April 1, 2021**

***ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, it was moved by Board Member Ford; seconded by Board Member Schulman; and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 4:49 p.m.***