

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, June 3, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. Present were: Chair, Dennis Landfried (Arrived at 2:21 p.m.), presiding, Vice Chair, Jerome Miller, and Regular Board Members, Ori Lee Ford, John Kakatsch, Ken Pariser, and Alternate Board Members Nannette Maxson (Arrived at 2:16 p.m.) and Duane Dyar (Left at 3:45 p.m.). Also present were: Steven Belden, Community Development Director; Barbara Carr, Business and Economic Development Administrator; Grant Alley, City Attorney; and Jennifer Myers, Recording Specialist. Absent: Board Member Roy Kennix, Board Member Sharon Schulman, and City Clerk Gwen Carlisle.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO FLAG AND ROLL CALL

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

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

PRESENTATIONS

1. Lee County's Economic Development perspective by John Talmage, Lee County Economic Development Director

Vice Chair Miller stated that that Mr. Talmage is not present, and Item 2 will go first.

2. FIU – Building Corridors of Opportunity: Fort Myers Community Economic Development Initiative by Dr. Murray

Steve Belden, Community Development Director, stated that Dr. Murray cannot be reached on Zoom and suggested proceeding with the Agenda until he can be reached.

REGULAR ITEMS

3. Approve Minutes of the May 6, 2021 Regular Meeting and May 24, 2021 Special Meeting

MOTION: Board Member Kakatsch moved to approve the Minutes of the May 6, 2021 Regular Meeting and May 24, 2021 Special Meeting; seconded by Board Member Pariser; motion carried unanimously.

4. Discuss addressing the City Council on June 7, 2021

Vice Chair Miller asked for suggestions on how the Board wants to make its presentation to the City Council and if the Board can get items green sheeted on the agenda. Board Member Ford responded that the Council liaison should be the one to green sheet items on the Council's Agenda. City Attorney Alley explained that when the Board makes a recommendation, it goes to the Community Development Department who takes it to the City

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Manager. Mr. Belden explained that depending on the motion, there are different ways of presenting items to Council including through an ordinance or a recommendation.

Board Member Maxson arrived at 2:16 p.m.

Vice Chair Miller felt that to get the best results, backup information should be provided to the City Council when making the recommendations. Discussion ensued regarding the amount of backup information necessary.

Chair Landfried arrived at 2:21 p.m.

PRESENTATIONS

2. Lee County's Economic Development perspective by John Talmage, Lee County Economic Development Director

John Talmage, Lee County Economic Development Director, stated that throughout the pandemic Lee County has had record occupancies, remote work, telehealth visits, construction, construction related jobs, and a new apparel industry with 4 different apparel companies moving their headquarters to Lee County. Chico's will be opening a Retail Fashion Academy at Cypress Lake High School and Florida Southwestern State College (FSW) is creating a 4-year Fashion Design Program. FSW School of Entrepreneurship is the largest entrepreneurship program in the State and the 12th largest in the country with 550 students who have started 136 business and brought in \$46 million in revenue. Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) is opening the Water School, which will be a blend of engineering, entrepreneurship, critical sciences, and PhD Programs which will attract metadata centers. Lee County is the third fastest growing aerospace destination in Florida, adding almost 200 planes to the fleet at Page Field Airport; Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) went from being the 42nd busiest airport in the country in 2019 to currently the 19th busiest and is the number one successful "through" airport in the country.

Mr. Talmage reported that the City has completed 4 million square feet of site selection. PGT Impact Resistant Hurricane Windows and Doors have chosen 136,000 square feet on Treeline Avenue and will bring 500 jobs by the end of 2021 paying an average salary at \$15.50 per hour plus full-time benefits. Amazon is considering Lee County for their number one HUB in Florida with approximately 600,000 square feet along Alico Road which will bring 4,000 jobs. Mr. Talmage shared that recently 5 companies have moved their facilities to Lee County from Collier County and businesses within Alico Road, Three Oaks, and Daniels Road are projected to host approximately 150,000 jobs which is only a 10-minute commute to Midtown. Lee County is working with LeeTran and the Public Transportation Network to create a better quality of life for citizens by not having to drive to work. Mr. Talmage explained that the workforce will be an ongoing problem for the future and funds need to be used towards upscaling the workforce.

Board Member Kakatsch asked if there is any focus on the retirement aspect of Fort Myers, or if Fort Myers would be considered overbuilt in that area. Mr. Talmage responded that the inbound and internal migration numbers are so strong that Fort Myers is not overbuilt in any area and there are many 55 plus housing units in production. Chair Landfried noted his concern that Fort Myers may be growing too fast to keep up with infrastructure which could result in traffic issues such as those that developed on the other coast of Florida. Mr. Talmage

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replied that there are plans to help alleviate traffic issues and improve connectivity. Discussion ensued regarding the industrial industry and business needs. Mr. Talmage suggested the Board invite Rita Davis, Lee County School District Director of Adult and Career Education, to speak with them regarding workforce programs. Chair Landfried suggested that Mr. Talmage update the Board on a quarterly basis.

2. FIU – Building Corridors of Opportunity: Fort Myers Community Economic Development Initiative by Dr. Murray (CONTINUED)

Mr. Belden reported that Dr. Murray is unable to give the presentation today, however, Dr. Murray will be giving the FIU Corridor Study presentation to City Council at a Workshop on June 21, 2021 and invited the Board to attend. He stated that once the findings of the study are presented to the City Council at the June 21, 2021 Workshop, implementation will be the next phase and he is forming a committee of resources and stakeholder to address the recommendations from the study. Chair Landfried stated the Board would like to be included in that committee and Board Member Pariser will be the person representing the Board. Mr. Belden stated that the Board can send any questions or comments regarding the study to him or Dr. Murray and that there will be further conversations with Dr. Murray in upcoming meetings.

BOARD MEMBER FOCUS AREAS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

5. Report on parks and beautification (Vice Chair Miller)

Vice Chair Miller summarized his recommendation points:

- A. Priority for the Parks and Recreation 2017 Master Plan to be updated and adopted including the vision for a (1) Day and night use all-purpose sports/soccer facility; (2) A signature indoor complex that would have scale to attract sports tourism/host regional tournaments and be a community amenity.
- B. Recommendation for City Council and staff to tour the City of Palms Park and investigate possible revision/reconfiguration/integration into a potential Midtown project; Recommend to Council to discuss with City Manager hiring a consultant to look at potential venues to increase economic development attractions in Midtown.
- C. City to look at a penny bed tax or half cent tax to fund public projects.
- D. For City Council to consider directing the City Manager to look at acquiring the described parcel Strap 13-44-24-P3-00011.001A from Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

Board Member Ford inquired about what Council discussed during their last meeting regarding signage. Councilperson Bochette stated that staff was asked to provide Council with information for potential locations for signage, challenges at those locations, and pricing. He expressed his support for Vice Chair Miller's recommendations and felt that the City of Fort Myers needs an anchor wherein a sports complex would be a great attraction and source of revenue. He conveyed that the Lee County School District has offered to contribute \$20 million towards a sports complex that could also be used for school sports. He felt that a City vision should be put together. Councilperson Bochette felt that it would be a good idea for

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the Chair from each City committee or advisory board to meet once a month to compare and share ideas. Ms. Carr stated that actions are being take in this direction. Board Member Ford suggested a Request for Proposal (RFP) allowing the experts to give the City ideas of what can be best for the City. Board Member Ford expressed his concern for a sports complex in the City due to disturbing surrounding residents. Board Member Maxson shared her support of preserving some of the City of Palms Park building. Board Member Ford asked if the Penny Bed Tax was tied to tourism and Mr. Belden replied that he did not know the answer. Mr. Belden stated it is worth looking at the City of Palms Park to see if any part is viable to save before demolition. Board Member Ford suggested the Forum area for the amateur sports complex, indoor and outdoor, wherein hotels and restaurants could all be in one spot. Discussion ensued regarding other Board's support of Item D.

Board Member Dyar left the meeting at 3:45 p.m.

MOTION: Board Member Kakatsch moved to approve the Parks and Beautification Recommendations and adding language to Item D that the Public Art Committee and the Beautification Advisory Board are in support of this acquisition; seconded by Board Member Maxson; motion carried unanimously.

Chair Landfried stated he would like to recommend to Council adding a continuing education budget of \$25,000.00 for this Board.

MOTION: Board Member Kakatsch moved to add a continuing education and travel budget for the Board of \$25,000.00 to the recommendations to Council; Seconded by Board Member Maxson; motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS

6. Community Development Department Director's Report - None

Mr. Belden stated the property values for the City of Fort Myers in 2021 is an increase of 9% from the previous year. He noted that infrastructure capacity in the City is doing well, although an additional water treatment plant needs to be built within the next 5 years. The plan for Midtown has been to have RFP to have experts give their ideas of what is economically viable in that area.

7. Business and Economic Development Administrator's Report

Ms. Carr conveyed that she is having conversations to get businesses interested in the area as a viable location. She stated that she is performing Google analytics on the Economic Development website which will provide information showing the parts of the website that people are visiting. She noted also working on grant opportunities and creating drafts for the new City Manager to review.

NEXT MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT – July 1, 2021

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Chair Landfried stated that he spoke with the Board's Council liaison, Councilperson Burson, regarding the Board's concern regarding his attendance and participation at their meetings. Chair Landfried stated that he meets with Councilperson Burson and Mayor Anderson regularly. Discussion ensued regarding meetings with the Council Liaison.

ADJOURNMENT: *There being no further business, it was moved by Board Member Kakatsch; seconded by Chair Landfried; and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 4:24 p.m.*