

Commission on Economic Competitiveness

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, September 10, 2015

10:00 AM IN ROOM 2D OF THE LOB

I. CONVENE MEETING:

The meeting was called to order at 10:08 AM by Chairman Rep. Tong.

The following commission members were present:

Rep. William Tong, Joseph McGee, Commissioner Kevin Sullivan, Commissioner Catherine Smith, Rep. McCarthy Vahey, Joseph Brennan, Jeffrey Hyde, Ellen Shemitz, Rodney Williams, Steven Glazer, Seth Ruzi, Lori Pelletier

Absent were:

Heather Somers (family emergency)

II. REMARKS BY THE CHAIRS:

A. PROCESS:

Rep. Tong explained that this commission was created in an effort to make Connecticut as economically competitive as possible during a time when states throughout the country compete with each other to get new businesses to come to their state and also to maintain existing businesses. He further explained that this is a permanent commission and that related panels and working groups will report to this commission and this group will use that information when drafting their reports. He indicated that the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House will most likely be at the next meeting to give the commission its charge. He specified that the commission purposefully has two legislators as members so that the group will have a direct link to the legislative process. It is his hope that the legislature and the Governor will look to the members for advice on policy to promote competitiveness. He expressed the importance of focusing on facts and to speak honestly throughout this process. He also mentioned that it is the intention of the commission to hold public hearings outside of Hartford in the future.

Joseph McGee echoed Rep. Tong's statements that this is a permanent commission and stressed the importance of other related commissions and panels to report to this group. He further explained that understanding how different tax rating systems construct their rankings is key to making such information useful. It is his hope that the commission

will invite those that create such ratings before this group to explain the components of their rankings.

B. COMMISSION WORK FOR REMAINDER OF 2015:

Rep. Tong indicated that the commission will have monthly meetings until the end of the year before the group produces their mandatory report.

III. INTRODUCTION OF COMMISSION MEMBERS:

The commission members proceeded to introduce themselves by way of sharing their backgrounds and their thoughts on the commission's goals and general charge.

IV. INTRODUCTION OF STAFF:

Rep. Tong introduced the staff of the commission: Tom Spinella (Administrator), Peter Murszewski (Clerk), and Louise Nadeau (Attorney).

V. PRESENTATION OF STATE'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY BY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER CATHERINE SMITH:

A copy of this presentation can be found on the Commission's website by clicking on the link entitled "DECD PowerPoint- State's Economic Development Strategy" under the September 10, 2015 meeting tab.

Before presenting Commissioner Smith explained that this strategy has been designed and revised over the years after speaking to many business owners, universities, community leaders, legislators, etc. first hand throughout the state.

Following the presentation Steven Glazer commented that knowing what field (government, education, etc.) the new jobs were created in is valuable information.

Commissioner Smith answered that the Department of Labor does have data on that subject matter, and that she knows that tourism, professional services, and healthcare are the top three.

Mr. McGee, Rep. Tong, and Commissioner Smith all commented on the concept of innovation as something that the commission could create a panel on in the future.

Joseph Brennan remarked that any concerns that he has heard from CBIA's members regarding the business climate in the state are not connected to specific programs that DECD offers but rather the overall business environment in Connecticut. He also commented on the need to speak honestly throughout the process.

Commissioner Smith acknowledged that the commission needs to deal with facts, yet it is important to point out negative comments that are not true about the states competitiveness.

Seth Ruzi commented that developing a growth strategy will be a key to improving Connecticut's economic competitiveness and that a review of the state's budget would be helpful.

Jeffrey Hyde explained that it is important that the commission deal with empirical data and measurements in an effort to see where the state stands in terms of competitiveness.

Rodney Williams expressed the importance of helping those on the "ground level" secure jobs. He further explained that young people are not receiving the proper training for the current jobs that are available as well as anticipated jobs in the future. He commented that the recent improvements that have taken place in Connecticut have not trickled down to all levels of workers.

Ellen Shemitz commented that the commission needs to address the number of opportunities that may or may not be available to certain races and how we can improve those figure.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Rep. Tong explained that the commission will meet once a month, and that the staff will be in touch when the next meeting is set. As of now there is not date/time set for the next meeting.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:34 PM by Chairman Rep. Tong.

Tom Spinella

Administrator