

Commission on Economic Competitiveness

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, October 13, 2017

10:00 AM IN ROOM 2D OF THE LOB

I. CONVENE MEETING:

The meeting was called to order at 10:14 AM by Chairman Rep. Tong.

The following commission members were present:

Rep. William Tong, Joseph McGee, Commissioner Catherine Smith, Commissioner Kevin Sullivan, Sen. Joan Hartley, Rep. Cristin McCarthy Vahey, Rep. Holly Cheeseman for Rep. Chris Davis, Rodney Williams, Brian Flaherty for Joseph Brennan, Jennifer Berigan for Lori Pelletier, Rep. David Yaccarino, Bradford Meacham

Absent were:

Sen. John Fonfara, Rep. Jason Rojas, Sen. Scott Frantz, Rep. Caroline Simmons, Seth Ruzi, John Scott, Steven Glazer, Henry Teskey, Ellen Shemitz, Matthew McCooe

II. REMARKS BY THE CHAIRS:

Rep. Tong introduced Bradford Meacham – new Speaker of the House appointment – he currently works as an attorney at Pratt and Whitney. He expressed excitement and looks forward to helping out any way he can to improve Connecticut's economic competitiveness.

III. AMAZON UPDATE:

Commissioner Smith provided an update on the Amazon proposal as the company recently announced that it is searching for a location for a second east coast headquarters which will be a full equal to the online retailers Seattle offices and grow to 50,000 employees. She further explained that DECD has been preparing to submit a fact based proposal in response to Amazon's RFP on behalf of the CT communities that fit the description of the location that Amazon is looking for. The proposal is due October 19th and DECD will be submitting 2 sites; Stamford and Hartford/East Hartford. Commissioner Smith thanked all of the businesses and local and state wide leaders as well as members of this commission that reached out to her agency and assisted with helping CT put together the best application possible.

Commissioner Sullivan expressed optimism with the state's application and also pointed out that the most effective thing the state can do to help their chances of landing Amazon is to pass a truly balanced budget that includes long term structural changes.

Chairman Tong and McGee commented that they will be submitting a letter of support on behalf of the commission in connection with the state's application.

Rep. Cheeseman expressed the need to stabilize electricity rates in the state as many businesses including Amazon use such rates when determining where to locate their businesses.

IV. CONNECTICUT 500 WORK PLAN/ UPCOMING MEETINGS:

A. MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Rep. Tong began a discussion regarding the need for the commission to hold a meeting centered on the current and future state of the manufacturing industry in Connecticut.

Many members commented on the importance of including a fact based, data driven "primer" on where the state is today and what the challenges are going forward in the manufacturing industry.

Commissioner Sullivan and Rep. Yaccarino both stated that the group needs to analyze who our "manufacturers" are now and how the skills needed to compete in the manufacturing industry have changed over the past 20-25 years. Crafting ideas and proposals with an eye towards the future of manufacturing will go a long way in improving our state's competitiveness.

Jennifer Berigan added that Congresswoman Esty may have some suggestions on how to put together such a panel as she has done something similar with a focus on federal policy.

Ms. Berigan and Rodney Williams also commented on the need for workforce development and the different ways to prepare and meet the needs of the manufacturing industry today and in the future need to be included in the discussion.

Mr. Williams commented on the need to provide proper training to future workers in the manufacturing industry and the importance of anticipating the demands of what will be asked of such workers. He also stressed that such training and opportunity need to be provided to all communities and citizens of all socioeconomic backgrounds as opposed to just "pockets" of communities.

Several members expressed the need to have labor, industry leaders, and educational leaders at the forefront of any discussion as equally important parts to improving the state's status in the manufacturing industry.

Rep. Cheeseman also stated that in regards to the education portion of the industry we need to include a discussion and examination of the focus that is being done in middle schools as this is the age when having a positive mentor can point young children towards picking a career in manufacturing.

Rep. McCarthy Vahey views the commission members as "conveners" that gather information and then based on the facts presented, members can make decisions to help improve the sector- yet first we need to assess.

Commissioner Smith offered to educate members on groups that are already in place at DECD and other agencies that are tasked with examining and offering recommendations in hopes of improving the manufacturing industry in the state. Similarly to Mr. Williams, she also stressed the importance of putting together an inclusive plan with jobs being created at all levels and for people of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Sen. Hartley commented on the need to hear directly from employers and the need for collaboration and leveraging more of a public/private pipeline.

Rep. Tong and Brian Flaherty discussed how there is a disconnect between business leaders and local legislators and that this commission could help bridge that gap with making personal introductions- there is no substitute for meeting someone face to face, shaking hands and discussing the current state of their business and what the state can do to help it move forward.

Commissioner Sullivan reiterated that the decision today to schedule an overview and participant discussion on manufacturing is a great next step. He explained that the McKinsey report and DECD identify key future economic sectors/clusters and he suggests that each of the commission's future meetings could work through that list. He also touched on the idea of one or two sessions with education leaders – UConn, CSU & Community Colleges, Connecticut Independent College and University Association, State Department of Education (K-12, including technical schools) and CABA (school boards) focused by: "What is your role in renewing and sustaining Connecticut's skills pipeline? What are you doing? What could you do? What results?" We need to know what's working but also have a forum to assess whether there is really a systemic commitment.

Rep. Tong explained that there will be a conference call soon of various members to discuss next steps and to work towards setting an agenda for the next meeting with a focus on the manufacturing industry.

B. CONNECTICUT HEALTH DATA COLLABORATIVE (CHDC)

Sen. Hartley proceeded to provide an update on the CHDC. She explained that the group's main focus has been on creating a path towards establishing Connecticut as a global leader in precision medicine and personalized healthcare. She went on to explain that Connecticut has the potential to become a national leader in the growing field of precision medicine, which aims to tailor disease prevention and medical treatment to individuals' unique genetic code, environment and experiences.

She further explained that several pieces of legislation (PA 17-85; SA 17-20; and SA 17-2) have resulted from the work that the group has done while meeting over the last several months. It is her hope that these pieces of legislation will help continue to put CT on the track to becoming a global leader in the field of precision medicine. Sen. Hartley also explained that the Commission on Economic Competitiveness (CEC) and CHDC need to continue to analyze accompanying studies which can help provide economic, population, employment, etc. trend lines as well as an asset inventory of the bio tech industry.

V. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Friday, November 17th, 2017 at 10:00 AM in room 2D of the LOB

VI. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:24 A.M. by Chairman Rep. Tong.

Tom Spinella

Administrator

Dawn Marzik

Clerk