

## **Commission on Economic Competitiveness**

### **MEETING MINUTES**

**Friday, December 1, 2017**

**10:00 AM IN ROOM 2D OF THE LOB**

#### **I. CONVENE MEETING:**

**The meeting was called to order at 10:10 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, Eric Brown for Joseph Brennan, John Harrity for Lori Pelletier, Rep. David Yaccarino, Rep. Caroline Simmons, John Scott, Steven Glazer, Ellen Shemitz

**Absent were:**

Sen. John Fonfara, Rep. Jason Rojas, Sen. Scott Frantz, Seth Ruzi, Henry Teskey, Matthew McCooe, Bradford Meacham

#### **II. REMARKS BY THE CHAIRS:**

Rep. Tong explained that today's meeting will focus 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- this meeting will supply that information.

#### **III. OVERVIEW OF CONNECTICUT'S MANUFACTURING SECTOR- PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE:**

##### **A. COMMISSIONER CATHERINE SMITH- DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

A copy of this presentation can be found on the commission's website by clicking on the link entitled "Commissioner Smith (DECD) Presentation- Manufacturing" under the December 1, 2017 meeting tab or by using the following link:

[http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20150904\\_Commission%20on%20Economic%20Competitiveness/20171201/Commissioner%20Smith%20\(DECD\)%20Presentation-%20Manufacturing.pdf](http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20150904_Commission%20on%20Economic%20Competitiveness/20171201/Commissioner%20Smith%20(DECD)%20Presentation-%20Manufacturing.pdf)

Commissioner Smith's presentation focused on Connecticut's economic development strategy (with a focus on advanced manufacturing), the state of the industry, and areas of strength and

opportunity for Connecticut going forward in regards to improving its economic competitiveness in manufacturing. Within her presentation the Commissioner touched on the fact that the diverse industry sectors in CT will help drive our economy. She went on to explain that CT holds a competitive advantage in several areas of manufacturing including aerospace, ship building, and devices. Commissioner Smith went on to discuss several key topics for the group to consider going forward including- the need to support and strengthen the supply chain, the importance of maintaining a strong workforce and developing young talent, continuing to make educational investments focused on manufacturing, providing financial assistance for business growth in manufacturing, creating a new ecosystem strategy, where partners have a greater role in innovation, production and distribution-manufacturers must move to a model where third parties assume increasingly greater responsibility for various facets of innovation, production and distribution. The Commissioner concluded her presentation by highlighting the strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Following the presentation commission member Rodney Williams commented on the need for improved 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 further 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.

A discussion between several members took place regarding the importance of continuing to make educational investments focused on manufacturing. Commissioner Smith explained that the reason certain areas of the state do not have school’s dedicated to this type of training is because it has been the strategy to “double down” where there is already a program in place and to not start from “scratch” where there is no foundation for such programs. She did add that there are plans to expand educational opportunities to some new areas including “promise zones.” Rep. Tong explained that there will be educational leaders at the next meeting to present to the group regarding their role in the manufacturing industry in Connecticut.

On the topic of education and its important role in manufacturing, Steven Glazer expressed his concerns with the cuts to UConn and other institutions in the recently passed budget.

Rep. Yaccarino commented that the commission should consider inviting Southern CT State University (SCSU) to address the group at the next meeting as they have a model program which can be emulated at other schools.

Ellen Shemitz expressed the importance of continuing to develop the talent/skills pipeline to meet the growing demands of this industry and she questioned what types of programs CT has in place to help meet these needs- i.e. several states are offering free education to students that attend community colleges in those states.

Rep. Cheeseman explained that a pathway needs to exist to engage children at younger ages (middle school) so that they can explore their interests in manufacturing and can be taught that they can have a rewarding career in the manufacturing field. She also commented on the need to get third parties/non-profits involved in promoting and assisting with the training of our future manufacturers.

Elliot Ginsberg of the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc. detailed the ***Dream It. Do It. Program*** which is led by the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology Inc. (CCAT) and financed by the Department of Economic and Community Development's Manufacturing Innovation Fund, Connecticut and is part of The Manufacturing Institute's nationwide campaign to dispel misconceptions about manufacturing and attract the creative, skilled young people needed to grow the industry.

Commissioner Sullivan shared his belief that there is still a major disconnect within the education field as it relates to its role in the manufacturing sector in CT. He is fearful that this may be a systemic problem. It is his opinion that the success of programs in the schools should not be so reliant on whether they receive funding assistance from the state- the schools need to be committed to and promote their own programs.

#### **B. COMMISSIONER SCOTT D. JACKSON- DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

A copy of this presentation can be found on the commission's website by clicking on the link entitled "Commissioner Jackson (DOL) Presentation- Manufacturing" under the December 1, 2017 meeting tab or by using the following link:

[http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20150904\\_Commission%20on%20Economic%20Competitiveness/20171201/Commissioner%20Jackson%20\(DOL\)%20Presentation-%20Manufacturing.pdf](http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20150904_Commission%20on%20Economic%20Competitiveness/20171201/Commissioner%20Jackson%20(DOL)%20Presentation-%20Manufacturing.pdf)

Following Commissioner Jackson's presentation Rodney Williams commented on the need to provide proper training in the schools which will prepare young students for the manufacturing jobs of the future. He also stated that not preparing young citizens for future jobs result in unemployment, crime, and a low standard of living.

Ellen Shemitz and Commissioner Jackson engaged in a discussion regarding barriers to growth that may exist. The commissioner commented that one of the biggest barriers is demographics as well as the achievement gap which plays itself out in the employment space and can damage the state's potential for economic growth.

John Harrity commented that under Governor Malloy's leadership, Connecticut has displayed a much more focused effort at improving the status of the manufacturing industry in the state. He believes that Connecticut is a much more competitive and innovative state then it has been in the past. He will be retiring from his position soon but is encouraged by the progress that has been made in manufacturing over the last several years.

A discussion between several members including Rep. Yaccarino, Rep. McCarthy Vahey, and Commissioner Jackson took place regarding the importance of continuing to make educational

investments focused on manufacturing. They all expressed the importance of a strong relationship between the State Department of Education and the State Department of Labor as being critical to continuing to improve the state's competitiveness in the manufacturing field.

Rep. Simmons remarked on the importance of expanding apprenticeships in the state in order to supply young students with the skills they need to meet the needs of the ever changing needs of the manufacturing industry. She also encouraged Commissioner Jackson to share with the legislature any barriers that his department faces to expanding such programs so that she and other law makers can help alleviate any obstacles.

#### **IV. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

Tentatively-Friday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 10:00 AM in room 2D of the LOB

#### **V. ADJOURNMENT:**

In closing the meeting Rep. Tong, Chairman McGee, and Commissioner Sullivan discussed the newly formed Commission on Fiscal Stability and Economic Growth that was created through passage of the recent budget. The co-chairs assured members that this new commission is not meant to replace this group and it is their hope that the Commission on Economic Competitiveness can serve as central component and bridge between new groups that form which exist under similar charges related to improving Connecticut's economy.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:24 P.M. by Chairman Rep. Tong.

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**Tom Spinella**

**Administrator**

**&**

**Dawn Marzik**

**Clerk**