

ATLANTIC CITY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

Zoom Conference Call

1) REMARKS FROM DCA CHIEF OF STAFF AND ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KIM HOLMES ON BEHALF OF LT. GOVERNOR SHEILA OLIVER

- a) Lt. Governor Oliver last week had the opportunity to speak with the Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey and the Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce about the future of Atlantic City after the pandemic and the recommendations report that came out of the Atlantic City Restart and Recovery Working Group.
 - i. During that event, the Lt. Governor conveyed that the Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office is already moving forward with the help of Atlantic City officials on the recommendation to improve the city's broadband Internet connectivity.
 - ii. For example, work is already underway to establish a Broadband Committee, which would oversee the study of Wi-Fi access among Atlantic City residents.
 - iii. Also, the Project Office is communicating with a broadband access expert at the New Jersey Department of Homeland Security and nonprofit organizations that are committed to narrowing the digital divide in communities.
 - iv. The Project Office, together with the City, is looking for ways to leverage federal funding through the American Rescue Plan to expand broadband access. Funding for broadband expansion in New Jersey will be drawn from an overall pool of nearly \$190 million in funding for capital projects.
 - v. Want Atlantic City to benefit from this funding because DCA believes that achieving 100 percent connectivity is doable and will enhance business opportunities across the city.
 - vi. With more people now able to work remotely, having 100 percent connectivity would be a huge selling point to entice people to live in Atlantic City.
- b) Plans to bring a supermarket back to the city are advancing after the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA) issued a memorandum of understanding last month to the developer and operator of the proposed ShopRite.
 - i. Under the MOU, the CRDA and Village Supermarket Inc. have until July 30 to enter into the final master operator and developer agreement.
 - ii. CRDA Executive Director Matt Doherty and Deputy Director Rosa Farias and the whole CRDA team is committed to getting that Shoprite into the city so that residents don't have to travel to the mainland or to Ventnor for their groceries and for affordable, healthy food.
- c) DCA is dedicated to helping communities strengthen their downtown business districts and, by extension, small businesses owned by local entrepreneurs.
- d) DCA runs a program called the Neighborhood Preservation Program that provides direct financial and technical assistance to help downtown neighborhoods that are at risk of blight turn things around.

- i. The program is expanding this year from 20 communities to 40 communities.
 - ii. Atlantic City is one of the communities eligible to apply to join the Neighborhood Preservation Program and receive up to \$125,000 in grant funding to utilize for neighborhood revitalization projects such as enhancements like lighting, seating, art, and performance spaces; public gardens and parklets; public recreational features, etc.
 - iii. Will be working with city leaders to make sure they are aware of this tremendous opportunity.
- e) Governor Murphy signed an executive order yesterday ending the utility moratorium at the end of June and creating a six-month grace period for individuals to sign up for assistance programs.
 - f) Even though the moratorium on utility shutoffs is coming to an end, the State won't be abandoning its commitment to helping New Jerseyans get through the public health crisis.
 - g) Now that people are getting vaccinated, the pandemic restrictions are being lifted, and people who have been out of work are reentering employment, the six-month grace period will allow people time to apply for utility assistance and get the help they need now.
 - h) Encourage people to apply for help with their utility bills and arrears by visiting NJ.GOV/DCA/DCAID.
 - i) Reminder that the application period for the second phase of the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program remains open.
 - i. Applicants may be eligible for up to 12 months of rental assistance to help pay for rent arrears incurred after March 13, 2020, and future rent to the extent that funds are available.
 - ii. People can get more information about the rental assistance program at nj.gov/dca or by calling 609-490-4550.

2) REMARKS FROM ATLANTIC CITY INITIATIVES PROJECT OFFICE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MICHAEL C. EPPS, ESQ., AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR INDIA STILL

- a) In conjunction with City of Atlantic City and Pastor Collins Days of Second Baptist Church, the Project Office is doing a youth program for at-risk youth and is looking to get young people employed and engaged. Seeking additional funding to include 44 more youth. Contact the Project Office if interested in contributing funding.
- b) Mark Cuban Foundation AI Bootcamp coming to Atlantic City in October. This is exemplary model for how members on the Atlantic City Executive Council can work together. Encouraged more Executive Council members to participate.
- c) The AI Bootcamp project executes parts of the Atlantic City Implementation Plan that the Project Office finalized in 2019 as a guide to meet goals and get work accomplished.
- d) Project Office helped start the South Jersey STEM cohort last year. Since then collaborated on a few grants with Stockton University and Rowan University and has been working on a STEM asset map for the city.
- e) The Project Office has been partnered with ThoughtSpot, a tech company in California, to run the AI Bootcamp. South Jersey Industries has stepped up to provide facilities and equipment for the bootcamp.

- f) Real question is how to take the AI Bootcamp and build a professional pathway for high school students who attend the bootcamp; how can local stakeholders build on the Mark Cuban Foundation's commitment and investment.
- g) Project Office came up with Bootcamp 2.0. This is where the Executive Council comes in.
- h) Looking at building stackable credentials for students coming out of AI Bootcamp in two areas: Cybersecurity and Data Analytics.
- i) There is a National Science Foundation grant that was recently announced. The Project Office and South Jersey STEM cohort would like to apply for second round of this grant and would like to take this Bootcamp 2.0 project and put it forward as a model project. The National Science Foundation grant program is looking to break the historic, structural inequities in STEM and is looking for applicants to have strong partnerships like the Executive Council.
- j) Long term, this pilot project could turn into something bigger for Atlantic City by creating higher paying STEM apprenticeships, addressing employer needs, creating an innovation economy, and staving off brain drain.
- k) For employers, there are three components to apprenticeships: on-the-job training, related technical in-classroom instruction, and incremental wage increase.
- l) This is happening in other parts of the country – apprenticeships in the areas of cybersecurity and data analytics. There are funds to offset these costs.
- m) New Jersey Department of Labor is really pushing apprenticeships as another entry into the workforce.
- n) Liz Terenik of ACDEVCO and the Chelsea Economic Development Corp. commented that the AI Bootcamp and Bootcamp 2.0 project is great work. She said one of the areas Atlantic City seems to have a leg up on is healthcare. She asked if the project could tie in with the local healthcare industry.
- o) Bojan Zilovic, a professor at Atlantic Cape Community College and part of the South Jersey STEM cohort, in response said that computer information systems play a huge role in healthcare as health systems try to share patient data efficiently and safely. He said one of the key elements to a successful grant application is submitting letters of support. He encouraged Executive Council members in the next few months to submit a letter of support for the South Jersey STEM cohort's National Science Foundation grant application.
- p) City of Atlantic City Business Administrator Anthony Swan asked when the letters of support are needed.
- q) Project Office Deputy Director India Still said Oct. 12 is the target date for submission of the NSF application. She said she can give BA Swan basic details to get it on the Atlantic City City Council agenda.
- r) Richard Tolson, vice chairman of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority, asked what the Internet broadband coverage is currently in Atlantic City.
- s) BA Swan said the City just stood up a broadband committee, which has an end goal of having the entire city wired into broadband. He said the first step in that process is mapping out what the city currently has. He added that the City would like to provide broadband access to city residents at cost; the City is not looking to make a profit.

- t) Project Office Deputy Director Still said the Project Office will be reaching out to potential employers that want to be part of the NSF grant application and also employers that are interested in providing apprenticeships.

3) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: TERRY GLEBOCKI, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, OCEAN RESORT AND PRESIDENT OF CASINO ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY

- a) Introduced herself to the Executive Council and said she has worked in Atlantic City for 34 years, always in gaming. She has worked up and down the Atlantic City Boardwalk, mostly behind the scenes in financial positions such as CFO or vice president of finance.
- b) She worked for the former Revel Resort and was the last person in the building when it shut down. From Revel she went down to Tropicana and then left there four years later to come back in February 2019 to Ocean Resort (the former Revel). She was tasked by the new management with turning things around at the property.
- c) In August 2019, she was promoted to interim CEO at Ocean Resort and then became permanent CEO at the end of 2019. Starting in June 2019, Ocean Resort began doing very well and looked forward to a great 2020 and then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Now Ocean Resort like all other casinos is trying to recover from the effects of the pandemic.
- d) During the pandemic, the Casino Association of New Jersey worked collaboratively and very often with each other to show that casino properties could reopen safely.
- e) Said she is excited to be a part of the Executive Council because people on this Council know how to fix what needs to be fixed in Atlantic City. She said the city has so much working for it like the oceanfront.

4) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: CHRISTINA FUENTES, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, NJ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

- a) Presented the NJEDA COVID-19 Economic Relief Package for small businesses.
 - i. Small Business Emergency Assistance Grant Program
 - ii. Small Business Emergency Assistance Loan Program
 - iii. Sustain and Serve NJ
 - iv. Small and Micro Business PPE Access Program
 - v. Programs to mobilize capital to micro, small, and medium-sized businesses
- b) NJEDA has helped 63,000 businesses as of March 24, 2021.
- c) NJEDA reopened registration for the Small Business Emergency Assistance Grant Program (phase 4). Businesses have to preregister online by June 30 to be eligible to apply – business.nj.gov/covid.
- d) Application period for phase 4 will open on July 7 for restaurants, childcare businesses. There are other application period openings for other types of businesses. NJEDA has language access services available.
- e) NJEDA has a set aside for eligible Opportunity Zone census tracts.
- f) Opening Soon will be phase 2 of the Small Business Emergency Assistance Loan Program, which will offer direct low-cost financing of up to \$100,000 for businesses and nonprofits.

- g) Opening Soon will be the New Jersey Community Stages Grant Relief Program, which is directed towards arts venues, managers, producers, and promoters.
- h) Talked about NJ Economic Recovery Act of 2020.
 - i. Within this Act, she mentioned the Emerge Program, which is live now. It is a tax credit program with a focus on communities with the greatest levels of distress and with a focus on new jobs. Businesses must make a minimum capital investment.
 - ii. NJ Aspire Program – potential launch in fall 2021 – awards tax credits equal up to 50% of development costs for targeted areas,
 - iii. Food Desert Relief Act – potential launch in fall 2021 – supports new supermarkets; target up to 50 areas in greatest need of access to nutritious foods.
 - iv. NJ Innovation Evergreen Fund – venture investment fund for NJ companies – later this year.
 - v. Main Street Recovery Finance Program – to establish Main Street Recovery Fund; grants and loans to small businesses and micro businesses.
 - vi. Brownfield Redevelopment Incentive – late fall launch.
 - vii. Historic Property Reinvestment Program – late fall launch.
 - viii. Community-Anchored Redevelopment Program
- i) NJEDA brought on new person to help with Atlantic City. Her name is Diana Rogers and she is the senior community development officer for Paterson, Trenton, and Atlantic City. She will help Atlantic City take advantage of these opportunities at NJEDA.
- j) As other NJ Economic Recovery Act programs go live, Ms. Fuentes said she is happy to come back and give more information specific to that program. She definitely wants Atlantic City to take advantage of the planning grants that are coming up, especially with American Rescue Plan funding coming into the city. She said Atlantic City is one of only three cities to be eligible for these planning grants.