**ATLANTIC CITY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

**Tuesday, November 19, 2019**

**Stockton University – Atlantic City Campus**

1. **REMARKS FROM KIM HOLMES, ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**
2. Lt. Governor Oliver unfortunately cannot attend today’s meeting because she is sick.
3. Feel honored to be here to give remarks on her behalf.
4. Jim Johnson was recently named New York City’s Corporation Counsel. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio could not have made a better selection. For almost two years, Jim worked incredibly hard to move Atlantic City in a new direction as the Governor’s Special Counsel. His intelligence, passion and empathy throughout the process of crafting a Transition Report and putting the report into action were truly a sight to behold.
5. Wish Jim nothing but the best as he takes the reins of New York City’s Law Department.
6. Because Jim knew his role was a transitional one, he was very focused on better positioning DCA and the City to address challenges facing Atlantic City.
7. As a result, DCA and the City are in a good place to continue to steadily execute the long-range strategies for Atlantic City.
8. DCA Deputy Commissioner Rob Long and Assistant Commissioner Holmes are in Atlantic City on a regular basis to help manage the City, and the Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office is here every day to do the work of transforming the Transition Report into tangible initiatives that support the city’s revitalization.
9. Speaking of the Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office, Rose Farias’ last day with the Project Office was this past Friday and she began her new job as CRDA Deputy Director this week.
10. While Rose will be deeply missed at DCA, the team is glad she isn’t going far and that she will continue to help revitalize Atlantic City in her role at CRDA. Expect to see her regularly at Atlantic City Executive Council meetings and other events and functions. The fact that much of her work at CRDA will be on improving housing in Atlantic City will be of huge help to the city’s revitalization efforts.
11. Despite these changes, the State and City are full steam ahead with work in Atlantic City. Have accomplished so much, but there is a lot more work to be done.
12. **REMARKS FROM ATLANTIC CITY INITIATIVES PROJECT OFFICE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MICHAEL EPPS**
13. The Atlantic City Executive Council and Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office (ACIPO) have a roadmap and we will continue undeterred.
14. Jim Johnson gave us good direction and we will continue in that direction, guided by the Atlantic City Transition Report and Implementation Plan
15. Thanked Rose Farias for her work in ACIPO and said he plans to continue to work collaboratively with her at CRDA.
16. Talked about the third quarterly report being done and said copies of the quarterly report are available or people to take and read.
17. ACIPO is focusing on the summer employment and internship program for 2020 and has a goal of placing 200 Atlantic City students in positions.
18. He welcomed Steve Callender, president of the Casino Association of New Jersey; City Council President Aaron Randolph; and representatives of Ørsted to the Executive Council meeting.
19. **ATLANTIC CITY UPDATE FROM MAYOR MARTY SMALL**
20. Must rebuild City Hall from inside out. City government employees had suffered tremendously, working for $22,000 with no raise or upward mobility in sight. We changed that.
21. Went from a $262.2 million budget a few years ago to a budget of $199 million. The City has come a long way, is making tough decisions and is seeking to change its climate and culture for the better.
22. People in City Hall felt underappreciated. In the 2019 budget, city employees got a raise, which will help the City retain good people. The minimum salary is now $25,500 and employees have a clear three-year path.
23. To make people feel more valued, he started employee-of-the-month program where employee is highlighted in ground floor of City Hall and gets a premium parking spot, lunch in Mayor’s Office, featured on the City’s website, and highlighted on the City’s social media.
24. Starting birthday celebrations every month.
25. City will recognize retirements, community service and life milestones (i.e. births, buying a first house), and will give out years of service letters.
26. Taking steps to improve the City’s website, which will not just be in English, but in other languages.
27. Starting tomorrow, every City Hall employee will get their picture taken and these photos will be posted on the City’s website so people know who employees are and what they do.
28. Will improve constituent services in City Hall. Every employee will greet constituents in person and on the phone with, “it’s a great day here in Atlantic City.” Want employees to start the conversation on a positive note and with professionalism. People slowly but surely buying in to the effort.
29. To pay for these morale-boosting efforts, the City is establishing a sunshine fund to which City Hall employees can chip in donations if they so choose.
30. The goal is to make the workplace enjoyable but keep it professional.
31. For initiatives outside of City Hall, one of Mayor Small’s first meetings as mayor was with Chief of Police Henry White to start a new police task force on Atlantic Avenue.
32. Want to take this initiative into troubled neighborhoods across the city.
33. Beginning in December or January, will launch a series called an evening with the mayor and city staff where the City will bring government to the people approximately two times a month. Want to be aggressive and out there and bold as we listen to the people.
34. Want to do one session a month about quality of life issues such as life insurance and credit counseling.
35. Talked about the grant the City received for improving Gardner’s Basin.
36. In response to Mayor Small’s remarks, Bert Lopez, president of the Hispanic Association of Atlantic County, asked if the City would be providing wrap around services to people in need as part of the new police task force on Atlantic Avenue. Mayor Small said police officers are referring people to places where they can get help; he said this is a serious effort to get people the assistance they need. The mayor noted the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA) is working on an initiative to help people in difficult situations get the help they need.
37. In response to Mayor Small’s remarks, Executive Council members said they hope coordination of a website for the City is done comprehensively so that everyone is seeing all the services available.
38. Carol Ruffo, president of the Chelsea Neighborhood Association, invited the mayor to the Chelsea Neighborhood Association meeting on Thursday. The mayor said he will be there.
39. Stockton University President Harvey Kesselman asked if the City was getting any support with the property tax issue. Mayor Small said the City is holding a sale of vacant, City-owned properties on December 17 at the Atlantic City Convention Center. The City will have about 200 properties up for sale. The mayor said he has asked CRDA if it can get some of the properties it owns in the city back on the property tax rolls. The mayor also said he testified last week before a State Assembly committee that Atlantic City should get some of the revenue from sports betting and online betting. The mayor added that the goal in 2020 is to have a municipal property tax decrease.
40. In response to Mayor Small’s remarks, DCA Deputy Commissioner Long said the property tax increase was not the result of spending. He explained the main culprit is a declining base of the city’s property tax valuation. Deputy Commissioner Long said DCA has been working on the issue on two tracks: one track is with State stakeholders looking at levers that the State has control over and the second track is at the local level. He said that in each track they are looking at immediate relief and long-term structural relief. He noted that property taxes between 2016 and 2019 grew about 3% for city homeowners and stated that for the city to continue to grow and redevelop, it needs stable taxes.
41. **PUBLIC SAFETY: UPDATE CONCERNING PROPOSAL FOR A TRAUMA RECOVERY CENTER DESIGNATION**
42. Frank Blee, director of government relations for AtlantiCare, said AtlantiCare submitted an application last week to the NJ Attorney General’s Office for its New Jersey hospital-based violence intervention program. Nine (9) hospitals in New Jersey will be selected for up to $2 million in grant funding. If AtlantiCare gets the grant, it will put up a $500,000 match.
43. The conversation about applying for the grant started in late spring/early summer as a way to address gun violence in Atlantic City among youth and young adults.
44. The Attorney General’s Office issued the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) on Sept. 22.
45. Mr. Blee said that if a patient arrives at the AtlantiCare ER with a gunshot or stab wound, the patient will also get a caseworker who is trained in violence intervention. He said this has to be a part of the process because research has shown a patient is most open to violence intervention at the moment they are receiving medical care for their injury. Also, if a patient is admitted to the hospital, the hospital will have trained, Masters-level behavioral health experts speak with them and try to break the cycle of violence since much of the violence is prompted by individual animosity.
46. Mr. Blee said there is a community component to the violence intervention. AtlantiCare is linking with community organizations in order to work with people to address their social needs and other needs in a more wholistic manner.
47. Some of the greatest successes in violence intervention come from people in the community who participate in the intervention process to help others.
48. If AtlantiCare gets the grant, the program will start January 1, 2020.
49. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: EDA PRESENTATION**
50. Christina Fuentes, director of Small Business Services for the NJ Economic Development Authority (EDA), explained that EDA started its Small Business Services unit in November 2018. One of the goals is to help the business community and local governments understand what EDA and State resources are available for small businesses.
51. EDA does have low cost financing for small businesses, but the business has to show that it has the money to pay back the loan.
52. Small Business Services offers technical assistance, a small business lease assistance program, a New Jersey Business Portal, and is working on a website.
53. Some of its partners include Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) and microlenders.
54. EDA has a direct loan program, small business fund, and a microbusiness loan program that is new. This new program helps small businesses that have been in business for less than three years. Through this program, EDA is trying to reach and help newer small businesses.
55. **PUBLIC HEALTH: UPDATE ON HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT**
56. Mr. Epps reported that a health needs assessment is being done to know where the City and State should focus energy.
57. Stockton University is helping with the compilation of various health surveys and Rutgers University is also doing an analysis of Atlantic City’s public health needs.
58. Once the assessment is complete and information available, the Atlantic City Executive Council’s public health committee will reconvene.
59. **GOOD OF THE ORDER**
60. Mr. Epps said the Atlantic City Executive Council needs to reconvene the economic development committee in order to take advantage of an upcoming EDA program.
61. Ms. Fuentes of EDA suggested the City and stakeholders need to identify five projects in Atlantic City so the city is ready to take advantage of the EDA economic development opportunity.
62. Elizabeth Terenik of the Chelsea Economic Development Corporation in Atlantic City said the corporation will be pursuing Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC) program funds from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs over the next 5-6 months and will put together a neighborhood plan. She said the corporation this past Saturday hosted a neighborhood wide open house of homes on the market and had about 50 prospective homeowners attend. She added increased housing stock is needed in Atlantic City in order to attract more people to live in the city. She asked if Atlantic City Executive Council members would be willing to draft a letter of support and provide feedback about what is needed in the Chelsea neighborhood as the corporation applies for NRTC funds.
63. Mr. Lopez reported that the Hispanic Association of Atlantic County hosted about 300 children at its Three Kings celebration. He said the association wants to keep this celebration and tradition alive and noted that people can contribute to the effort.