

# **ATLANTIC CITY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

**Tuesday, October 15, 2019**

## **Stockton University – Atlantic City Campus**

### **1) REMARKS FROM JIM JOHNSON, SPECIAL COUNSEL TO GOVERNOR MURPHY**

- a) Welcomed Marty Small in his new capacity as Mayor of Atlantic City.
- b) Certified public manager (CPM) training being conducted by Rutgers University that City directors and supervisors are taking. After visiting a class session, he was impressed with City employees' dedication to improve their individual functions, their desire to deliver services for city residents, and their excitement.
- c) Pursuing design competition for development of Bader Field. Use Highline development in New York City as a model. The Highline was an abandoned railroad track that had been used in New York City's meat packing district and the City was trying to find ways to redevelop it. New York City did it by taking design ideas from around the metropolitan area, which resulted in a tremendously beneficial development along the Hudson River.
- d) Quarterly report for the three-month period of July through September 2019 will be released shortly.
- e) Discussion underway about how to enhance summer offerings for the city's youth for the summer of 2020.

### **2) REMARKS FROM MAYOR MARTY SMALL**

- a) Noted that he is Acting Mayor now, but tonight City Council will vote for Mayor. If he is selected, he will vacate his Second Ward council seat and Council President position to serve as Mayor of the city. City Council is scheduled to vote tomorrow for a new Council President and Vice President.
- b) Said this is an incredible opportunity and he plans on being a cooperative partner with the State of New Jersey and supporting the State's agenda in Atlantic City.
- c) Told Matt Doherty, executive director of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA), that he looks forward to working with him and the CRDA organization. Remarked that a lot of great things are happening in Atlantic City because of the support of CRDA.
- d) Constituent services will be a major focus of his time as mayor.
- e) Said the way Atlantic City gets to the next level is by increasing the property tax ratable base. The City must increase the number of residents living in Atlantic City and he plans to make this a priority.
- f) Thanked the Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office (ACIPO) and their work, as well as Stockton University, Atlantic County Community College, and Joe Jingoli of Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Atlantic City for their efforts to assist Atlantic City.
- g) Said the Atlantic City Mayor's Office is open for positive business.
- h) Excited to shape city administration into something that is more conducive to city residents and looks forward to more partnerships with the city's civic associations.

- i) In response to Acting Mayor Small's remarks, Joe Jingoli said he wants to do more with summer programming for city youth. He suggested working with the State/DCA to apply for grants to feed the children who participate in the summer programs and to use the location where children are eating to provide wrap around services. Acting Mayor Small said that process of finding funding will start next week as he visits leadership at each of the casinos. He also said the City will be asking Atlantic County for funding and other opportunities. He wants to ensure the City has the resources in place to have a successful summer 2020 program.
- j) In response to Acting Mayor Small's remarks, Carol Ruffo, president of the Chelsea Neighborhood Association, invited Acting Mayor Small to the association's meeting this week. Acting Mayor Small thanked her for the invitation.
- k) In response to Acting Mayor Small's remarks, Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce President Joe Kelly said planning for the summer 2020 internship and jobs program for city youth must start immediately and can't wait until January. He suggested a goal of helping 150 young people and said the internships and job opportunities should be countywide with transportation provided for the youth to get them to the jobs.
- l) In response to Acting Mayor Small's remarks, Libbie Wells, president of the First Ward Civic Association, asked about road improvements in the city. Acting Mayor Small said that starting in spring 2020, the City will begin work on 10 streets evenly divided by wards. Once those streets are complete, the City will pick another 10 streets and get the work done.
- m) In response to Acting Mayor Small's remarks, Stockton University President Harvey Kesselman said that more Stockton employees are living in Atlantic City. He stated that Stockton University wants to have a summer academy for city youth in the area of entrepreneurship and that the university is going to push for more summer programming for city residents.

### **3) LT. GOVERNOR OLIVER REMARKS**

- a) The Atlantic City Executive Council has been focused on pulling an agenda together for Atlantic City for the past year.
- b) People are dismayed that former Mayor Gilliam pleaded guilty in federal court to defrauding a youth basketball program he helped found of money that was meant for the young people.
- c) She said the Murphy Administration is committed at the state level to Atlantic City and that the former mayor's actions are not going to deter the State's focus, which is on moving the city forward.
- d) Last week DCA Division of Local Government Services Director (DLGS) Melanie Walter and DCA senior management met with Acting Mayor Small to reiterate that the Municipal Stabilization and Recovery Act (MSRA) is still in effect. The group encouraged Acting Mayor Small to work closely with DLGS Director Walter.
- e) Referenced the Local Assistance Bureau (LAB) within DLGS and what it can do to help municipalities. Noted that LAB staff conducted ethics training for Atlantic City staff, as well as Faulkner Act training to make certain that the Mayor and City Council know what their roles and responsibilities are in the City's form of government.
- f) Introduced DCA Assistant Commissioner Kim Holmes, who is helping DCA Deputy Commissioner Rob Long with the work in Atlantic City. Assistant Commissioner Holmes is tasked with the City's planning and development; overseeing human resources in city government; police and fire; and EEO complaints.

- g) The State will work with Acting Mayor Small to clean up city government.
- h) Met recently with ACIPO Deputy Director Rosa Farias and state Senator Troy Singleton to talk about finding ways to encourage Atlantic City and other municipalities to take advantage of DCA programs like the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit program, Main Street New Jersey, and the Neighborhood Preservation Program.
- i) Noted that the State Legislature is revamping New Jersey Economic Development Authority (EDA) tax credits and that it is about to have a historic property tax credit, which could be helpful to the city since there are a lot of historic structures in Atlantic City. EDA will also do a carve out and tax credit for food deserts in the state.
- j) Said the State, City and stakeholders are still on course to do the initiatives that the Atlantic City Transition Report has set out.
- k) Said she understands that last week was a disappointing experience for many people in Atlantic City, especially reading the negative press. Want to change that trajectory and have to work very hard to change that perception.
- l) Noted that DCA Deputy Commissioner Long is facilitating on DCA's behalf a group that is looking to mitigate the property tax increase impacting city homeowners.
- m) Deputy Commissioner Long said the group has been very active at looking to identify sources of immediate property tax relief and then long-term structural help. He explained that the larger group has divided up into two smaller groups: one comprised of state stakeholders and the other local stakeholders (i.e., city, school, county). The groups meet every week and the goal is to come up with as many ideas as possible and present them to Lt. Governor Oliver and Governor Murphy for consideration.
- n) The Lt. Governor also mentioned assistance that the DCA Office of Local Planning Services, New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, and the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority can offer Atlantic City.
- o) Said she wants to be more forceful in code enforcement in Atlantic City and is looking to see if DCA can lend some of its code inspectors to Atlantic City. She will report back once she has something to say.
- p) In response to Lt. Governor Oliver's remarks, Diane Sterner, community strategies director for New Jersey Community Capital (NJCC), said NJCC can help with the programs that were mentioned and are available to be more involved.
- q) In response to Lt. Governor Oliver's remarks, Acting Mayor Small said Venice Park, which was a middle-class neighborhood in the city, was ravaged by Superstorm Sandy, forcing a lot of families to leave. He said CRDA assistance is helping revive this neighborhood but suggested more can be done. The Lt. Governor said DCA will allocate \$20 million of Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery funds to go to Atlantic City infrastructure that was damaged by Sandy. She said DCA is working on a waiver to submit to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and, if approved, funding can be used for bulkheads, roadway improvements, etc.
- r) In response to Lt. Governor Oliver's remarks, Jim Johnson said ACIPO is looking at the Atlantic City Implementation Plan to make sure benchmarks are being reached. He wants to look at other plans around the city and make sure they are aligned with what is in the Atlantic City Transition Report and Atlantic City Implementation Plan. He also wants to hear from the business community about things that can be improved.

#### **4) UPCOMING TESTIMONY IN THE STATE ASSEMBLY BY SPECIAL COUNSEL JIM JOHNSON**

- a) Mr. Johnson testified in June 2019 before state Senator James Beach’s committee regarding casinos in Atlantic City.
- b) New Jersey Assembly Tourism, Gaming and the Arts committee has now asked Mr. Johnson to provide testimony. It will be more refined with additional data from the New Jersey Treasurer’s Office and the impact on Atlantic City casinos of additional casinos coming to the Mid-Atlantic region.
- c) Mr. Johnson talked again about how casino work kicks in at 4 p.m. and how that has a tremendous impact on family life in Atlantic City when one or both heads of household are working evening and night shifts.
- d) State Senator Beach is scheduled to come to Atlantic City for a tour on November 14. After Mr. Johnson’s testimony in June, Senator Beach wanted to see the city himself.
- e) In response to Mr. Johnson’s remarks, Joe Jingoli said casino licenses come with a responsibility to the casino licensee and noted the enabling legislation spells out the responsibility. Mr. Jingoli said if all casinos do what they are supposed to be doing, the city will see a positive impact.
- f) In response to Mr. Jingoli’s remarks, ACIPO Executive Director Michael Epps said when casinos first opened in Atlantic City, many of them were more local companies that had a relationship with the city. Once casinos started to become more corporate, multinational entities, Atlantic City became a part of their overall portfolio and they were chasing bottom line.

#### **5) PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT: BADER FIELD DESIGN COMPETITION CONCEPT**

- a) Quoting actor Denzel Washington, Mr. Johnson said, “If you want something you never had, you have to do something you never did.” Mr. Johnson said Atlantic City has had a reactive process to date with Bader Field wherein the City had relied on individual developers to come up with development ideas for the property.
- b) The design competition concept is proactive. The State and City would have a jury to select top ideas with winners getting a set of standards to abide by (i.e. helping local economy) in developing the design proposals.
- c) Mr. Johnson said that at the end of day, there might not be anything that comes of the design competition, but at least the City gets out of the failed cycle of relying on developers to come up with uses for Bader Field.

#### **6) YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: ENHANCED SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FOR 2020**

- a) ACIPO Community Outreach Manager Elijah Langford reported that ACIPO has a very ambitious goal of 200 internships for city youth in summer 2020. This is compared to the 41 internships this past summer.
- b) ACIPO would also like to increase the number of at-risk youth served this summer to Joe Jingoli’s point earlier in the meeting.
- c) ACIPO is asking everyone on the Atlantic City Executive Council to step up to make this happen.
- d) In response to Mr. Langford’s remarks, Mr. Jingoli said that during the youth gun violence that happened this past summer, he and Pastor Collins A. Days, Sr. of Second Baptist Church in Atlantic City, came up with a program on the fly. They did it in a phone call and put it in action the week following the call. Mr. Jingoli said at-risk youth need a job to do, a paycheck, and a mentor. He suggested maybe having each casino pair up with a faith-based

organization and do something similar. He noted it doesn't take a lot of financial investment.

- e) In response to Mr. Jingoli's remarks, Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce President Joe Kelly said sometimes the simpler a program is, the better. He noted that government regulations can become a barrier when government funds are used. He suggested that Lt. Governor Oliver can perhaps expedite such government regulations for these youth programs.
- f) In response to Mr. Kelly's remarks, ACIPO Executive Director Epps said ACIPO needs to get the businesses in the Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce to buy in to the expanded youth program for summer 2020. Mr. Kelly said the door is wide open and stated that employers are not opposed to getting involved, but they want a turnkey, easy program in which to participate.

## **7) LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES PRESENTATION**

- a) Jim Johnson and ACIPO will lead a session on November 20 at the New Jersey State League of Municipalities Annual Conference in Atlantic City on Atlantic City's transformation, best practices, and the shared experiences in New Jersey's urban centers.
- b) The session will begin at 11 a.m. in Room 321 of the Atlantic City Convention Center.

## **8) GOOD OF THE ORDER**

- a) Carol Ruffo, president of the Chelsea Neighborhood Association, said the perception about Atlantic City is that it is dirty and unsafe. She said word has to go out beyond the Press of Atlantic City that good things are happening in the city.
- b) Atlantic City Executive Council member Amber Heard, who owns Hamlett Consulting, said she can assist with this. Lt. Governor Oliver suggested Ms. Heard link with DCA Communications and the Governor's Communications Office to get the good news out about the City
- c) The next Atlantic City Executive Council meeting will be on November 19. ACIPO Executive Director Epps suggested if Executive Council members have an addition to the agenda, to please get it to him by the week before the meeting.