

ATLANTIC CITY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday, October 20, 2020

Zoom Conference Call

1) REMARKS FROM LT. GOVERNOR SHEILA OLIVER

- a) Wonderful to see some Atlantic City Executive Council members in person last Wednesday for the groundbreaking of phase II of Stockton University's Atlantic City campus. It is a great project for Stockton and for the city.
- b) Noted that Rutgers-Newark has contributed to renaissance of City of Newark's downtown. Expects the same thing to happen with Stockton University in Atlantic City.
- c) The new residence hall once built will allow more students to live on the Atlantic City campus and will increase foot traffic and commerce into the Chelsea neighborhood. Anywhere higher education plants a flag and puts down roots in a community, it has a ripple effect on local businesses.
- d) Ørsted is hosting virtual open houses this week for the public to learn more about the Ocean Wind project that will be built off the coast of Atlantic City.
- e) Believes there will soon be an announcement that Atlantic City is joining the South Jersey ecosystem of the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network. Initiative is aimed at creating new pathways for Atlantic City youth to higher-paying career opportunities in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math.
- f) This is what a diversifying economy looks like. Diversifying the economy of Atlantic City and the larger Atlantic County region was important pre-COVID. Now even more essential post-COVID because we have seen how deeply the pandemic and business shutdowns have affected the economy in Atlantic City and the larger region.
- g) Atlantic City and Atlantic County have the highest unemployment rates in the entire state and among the highest in the nation because of the reliance on the casino industry and tourism.
- h) No doubt that casinos will rebound. Internet gaming and sports betting have helped the casinos tremendously.
- i) Has seen herself how people have come back to enjoy what the casinos have to offer.
- j) Last week had opportunity to meet with casinos executives. Main issue talked about was expanding dining. However, worried about COVID-19 positive cases going up.
- k) Thinks people are getting more relaxed with precautions which is why cases going up. People have to mask up, wash hands, etc. Epidemiologists believe small gatherings indoors are cause of uptick. Need to stabilize numbers in order to expand dining.
- l) Last week of September the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA) reopened its Small Landlord Emergency Grant Program to assist small landlords and their tenants by covering missed rent from April through July 2020.
- m) Earlier this month, DCA launched three COVID-19 relief programs through its Main Street New Jersey, Neighborhood Preservation, and Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit

programs to help neighborhoods and vulnerable small businesses impacted by the pandemic.

- n) DCA also started in October a Local Government Emergency Fund to aid counties and municipalities that were excluded from the federal government's direct Coronavirus Relief Fund allocation plan. Emergency fund will help local governments address necessary and unexpected expenditures necessitated by the pandemic. Through this fund, local governments in Atlantic County, including county government, are receiving \$6.3 million. Atlantic City itself is receiving close to \$1 million.
- o) Announced last week \$100 million in CARES Act funding for COVID-19 economic recovery. Most of the money, \$70 million, will be distributed to restaurants, microbusinesses, and other small businesses through Phase 3 of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority's Small Business Emergency Assistance Grant Program. Of the rest of the funding:
 - i. \$10 million will be used to help small businesses purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) through the NJEDA Small and Micro Business PPE Access Program;
 - ii. \$15 million will go to support renters through DCA's COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program; and
 - iii. \$5 million will support food banks and other hunger relief efforts.
- p) Governor also announced last week that the moratorium on utility shutoffs has been extended until March 15, 2021. This applies to all residential gas, electric and water utilities that are both public and private. Additionally, \$15 million from the Coronavirus Relief Fund will be allocated to assist low-income households in paying off utility arrearages.
- q) Bring all of this up to show that we are doing all that we can to help our residents, businesses and landlords.
- r) Atlantic City Police Department (ACPD) Chief Henry White retired. Knows how important public safety is to Atlantic City. Chief White's retirement allows City and State to look at police reform; working with Mayor Small to establish search committee for next police chief. Doesn't mean we're bringing in somebody from outside the ACPD; not ruling it out, not ruling it in. Search committee is being set up and will have advertisement for police chief.
- s) Not negating expertise and experience of anyone in the current police department; looking for someone who will move the ACPD forward and lead a force that provides optimal, maximum public safety so people know they are safe in the city.

2) REMARKS FROM ATLANTIC CITY INITIATIVES PROJECT OFFICE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MIKE EPPS

- a) Talked about Stockton University groundbreaking.
- b) AtlantiCare CEO Lori Herndon will let us know about AtlantiCare's medical arts complex project in Atlantic City. Perhaps there will be a groundbreaking for that project in the near future.
- c) Eds and Meds is a great winning combination.
- d) Applauded ACPD for saving life of person who was threatening to jump from one of the casino parking garages. ACPD received good press for great work.

3) REMARKS FROM ATLANTIC CITY INITIATIVES PROJECT OFFICE DEPUTY DIRECTOR INDIA STILL

- a) Survey sent to businesses in area about what they need in terms of work force; Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office (ACIPO) received around 25 completed surveys.
- b) Thanked ACEC members for responding to surveys and requests for support letters for initiatives that benefit Atlantic City. Tom Hannon, the executive director of the Atlantic City Housing Authority, received eight (8) letters of support from ACEC members for the Housing Authority's application to HUD to redevelop the Stanley Holmes public housing community in the city. The support letters make a difference.
- c) Talked about press release being drafted to announce that Atlantic City has joined the South Jersey STEM & Innovation Partnership (SJSIP), which is a community of collaborative partners seeking to improve science, technology, engineering, and math education and career pathways for people across southern New Jersey.
- d) Once press release is issued, ACIPO will begin the work of the Atlantic City STEM cohort.

4) ATLANTIC CITY UPDATE: MAYOR MARTY SMALL

- a) Talked about COVID-19 in his office. One of his staff tested positive and he tested negative. Said his staff was tested yesterday. Mayor's Office will be operating remotely and will continue to follow established COVID-19 protocols.
- b) Thanked AtlantiCare CEO Lori Herndon for providing Mayor's Office with COVID-19 rapid testing.
- c) Most diverse class of Atlantic City firefighters getting close to graduation. Recruits are doing burn training this week. All 16 are from Atlantic City.
- d) Talked about scanners for sign in and sign out at City Hall; will take people's temperature.
- e) Thanked DCA for giving the City \$906,000 in coronavirus aid. City officials right now determining the best way to use the funds.
- f) Looking to open City Hall all 5 days. Currently open 4 days a week with deep cleaning on Friday.
- g) Talked about trucking industry in Atlantic City.
- h) Will have meeting about Airbnbs this evening. Looking forward to passing strong ordinance enforcing Airbnbs.
- i) Conversations with minor league baseball team that is interested in Bader Field.
- j) Talked with Dallas Mavericks executive about bringing basketball operations to Atlantic City.
- k) Working with Atlantic City Fire Department Chief Scott Evans and Director of Public Works Paul Jerkins to get City's curfew sirens up and running. Sirens are to alert young people to get off the streets and back home. Many of them aren't working so hard for police to enforce nighttime curfew.
- l) Talked about Stockton University groundbreaking.
- m) Police department has task force out on Atlantic and Pacific avenues; had something like 20 arrests in recent days.
- n) Waiting on State approval to create new City division around recreation.
- o) City has received lead prevention grant from DCA.
- p) Lt. Governor Oliver asked Mayor Small about Lincoln Tech. She said job placement for graduates is close to 90 percent. She asked if there is an intent to open up a Lincoln Tech in Atlantic City and noted it is a great opportunity for city residents to gain marketable job skills. Mayor said Lincoln Tech is coming to the City and is using the Ocean Inc. building as a local headquarters.

- q) Donna Danielson of Tanger Outlet said the outlet stores are having a real issue with homelessness in the Tanger Outlet area. No bathrooms are open so homeless individuals are using sidewalks in The Walk as their bathroom.
- r) Mayor said Business Administrator Swan has developed a plan for the homeless. The City recognizes this is an issue.

5) GENERAL DISCUSSION: JIM RUTALA

- a) Talked about blue economy initiative that came out of Mayor's Office and is supported by City Council and Atlantic City working group. Blue economy has been talked about for years in Atlantic City, but it seems now the time is right.
- b) Blue economy involves marine and coastal resources – offshore wind, commercial fishing, coastal resiliency, recreational boating, coastal tourism.
- c) Casino gaming industry employment base has shrunk significantly.
- d) Atlantic City has a lot of the infrastructure needed to expand the blue economy. City has a university, community college, convention center, boardwalk, and beaches.
- e) City has a cluster of projects, including Ørsted's O&M facility and Atlantic Shores Operations Base; each area compliments the other.
- f) NJ WIND Institute can serve as resource.
- g) As part of study, Washington-based firm hired to research funding sources that are available for growing blue economy; list is long.
- h) Coastal Resiliency Institute at Stockton University continues to be high on priority list for Stockton.
- i) Atlantic City is ideal location because near current or planned offshore wind activity, location is accessible to people, allows for creation of special purpose facilities to support growing facilities, demonstrates independence by being a stand-alone facility, incorporates innovative design (art culture is thriving and part of city's fabric), leverages underutilized assets (city has many such assets).
- j) Other reasons – Atlantic City has strong commitment to sustainability, leader in coastal resiliency (only city in New Jersey doing more is Hoboken); commitment to diversifying the economy.
- k) NJ WIND Institute is a once in a generation opportunity for the city and the region. City Council supports it, mayor wrote letter in support, and Atlantic City Restart and Recovery Working Group supports it.
- l) Next Steps include continuing to work with State to understand what is needed.
- m) Having support of ACEC, business community and working group is important to move the agenda forward.

6) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: JACQUES HOWARD, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF REDEVELOPMENT, CITY OF ATLANTIC CITY, DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- a) Discussed Opportunity Zones and the criteria for a census tract being designated as an Opportunity Zone.
- b) 2017 federal legislation established for Opportunity Zones; spoke about legislation.

- c) Talked about goal/focus of OZ program – redevelopment of vacant/blighted properties.
- d) Looking for partnerships to show a lot of interest in redeveloping OZ areas of Atlantic City.
- e) No OZ projects in Atlantic City as of yet except for one small one that is very general
- f) Lt. Governor Oliver said that Lynne Patton, the regional administrator for HUD, has asked DCA to help organize a meeting later this year in Atlantic City about Opportunity Zones. The Lt. Governor will let the Executive Council know when that meeting has been organized.

7) GOOD OF THE ORDER

- a) Amber Hamlett, an ACEC member, said Ørsted has an Ørsted Cares program for utility assistance for households in need; mentioned Ørsted hosting virtual open houses this week about its offshore wind project.
- b) Steve Callender, president of the Casino Association of New Jersey, thanked the Governor and Lt. Governor for meeting with the Association in Atlantic City last week. Talked about opportunity for using Atlantic City Convention space; casinos have big rooms that are conducive to social distancing. Working on a plan to take advantage of this asset. Brought up homelessness issue in Atlantic City, casinos are looking to get it improved and are happy to help with this issue.
- c) Bert Lopez, president of the Hispanic Association of Atlantic County, thanked Lt. Governor Oliver for appearing on the Latino Motion news program. He will send the interview to Mike Epps for distribution to ACEC members.