

# ATLANTIC CITY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

## Zoom Conference Call

### 1) INDIA STILL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF ATLANTIC CITY INITIATIVES PROJECT OFFICE

- a) NAACP will host a national town hall about the COVID-19 vaccine with Cory Booker, one of New Jersey's U.S. Senators.
- b) Provided a briefing on the recent social services summit held. The topic of the summit was homelessness. Dr. Wilson Washington, the City of Atlantic City health director, talked with the organizations that attended the summit about the city's strategy for addressing homelessness.
- c) Noted the jobs council will be reconstituted. Stated that the Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office (ACIPO) will reach out to ACEC members individually to see if they are interested in joining the jobs council.
- d) ACIPO is working on an asset map of STEM resources in Atlantic City for the Atlantic City cohort of 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. ACIPO is also working with the Atlantic City school district to develop a cybersecurity component in STEM education for high school students.
- e) Stated that work is underway to submit an application to the Mark Cuban Foundation to bring a free Intro to Artificial Intelligence Bootcamp to Atlantic City for high school students in the city to increase AI literacy and understanding. Ørsted and South Jersey Industries are part of the application process.

### 2) ATLANTIC CITY UPDATE: MAYOR MARTY SMALL

- a) Both Moody's and S&P upgraded to positive the outlook for City of Atlantic City finances in the last month.
- b) The City is projected to have municipal tax decreases each year for the next three years.
- c) City is hosting a drive through toy giveaway for families for the holiday season. It is doing a turkey/ham giveaway with side dishes for families who otherwise can't afford a holiday dinner. The giveaway will take place on December 21 in the outdoor courtyard outside City Hall.
- d) Announced that the Atlantic City Convention Center can be used for the Artificial Intelligence Boot Camp if the application to the Mark Cuban Foundation is successful.
- e) City administration and City Council are continuing to work on regulations regarding short-term rentals in the city.
- f) Bader Field will be used as a training site by the Ernest Trans School of Trucking beginning in spring 2021.
- g) Talked about the Atlantic City firefighter graduation ceremony on December 2 and the diversity of the class of 16 women and men that was sworn in.

- h) A small business course hosted by the City will start in spring 2021.
- i) The city's website has been revamped. Especially proud of the GovPilot function that enables people to access city services such as vital records, parking permits, marriage and pet licenses, public records requests, landlord registration, and certificate of continued occupancy (CCO) inspections for rental and resale properties online.
- j) Partnered with company that will do augmented reality of Atlantic City businesses that will serve business community.
- k) Thanked Lt. Governor Oliver for DCA awarding \$900,000+ in federal COVID-19 recovery funding to Atlantic City. The money is being used for a lot of things, particularly for curfew sirens that can be used for emergency announcements throughout the city.
- l) Proud to partner with Newark Mayor Ras Baraka and other urban mayors on a \$100 million fund called the FAM Fund for 'Forty Acres and a Mule.' Fund is for Black and Hispanic small businesses.
- m) Met with ACDEVCO about development options in areas of the city that are vacant.
- n) Kicked off the City's division of recreation. Mentioned that one of the programs can employ senior citizens and pay them \$12 an hour as long as they work for a non-profit.
- o) City is helping with an event to demolish the vacant Trump Plaza building along the boardwalk. There is an ongoing auction to determine who will be first person to press the button to demolish the building. Money raised will go to the Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City.
- p) The City will organize a meeting between Dale Finch, the city's licensing and inspection director, and business owners surrounding Trump Plaza to go over the demolition timeline and what to expect with the demolition.

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

- a) Lt. Governor Oliver had to attend another meeting and asked me to speak on her behalf.
- b) With the hopeful news of the COVID-19 vaccine, we can see a light at the end of this dark tunnel we've been in since March.
- c) Distribution of the vaccine is going to take time. We are likely looking at several months – perhaps not until the spring or early summer – before members of the general public will be able to get the vaccine. Therefore, the Murphy Administration urges everyone to remain vigilant in stopping the spread of the coronavirus. Continue to social distance, wear a face mask, wash your hands with soap and water, and strictly limit gatherings, especially indoors and especially during the holidays.
- d) We know people are fatigued and desperately want things to go back to normal or as close to normal as possible. But let's all hold on a little while longer as the vaccine is distributed across our state and nation.
- e) Commended and congratulated the 16 women and men who were sworn in as new Atlantic City firefighters earlier this month. The graduation was the culmination of a recruitment process that the City and DCA began last year with an application, written exam, agility test, and interview from a panel of fire safety, city, and state officials. We wanted to ensure the best candidates were selected to become Atlantic City firefighters.
  - i. More than 500 people submitted applications to become city firefighters.

- ii. The firefighter graduates successfully completed 10 weeks of intensive training at the Atlantic County Fire Academy.
  - iii. All the graduates are from Atlantic City.
  - iv. The class was the most diverse in the fire department's history, including the fire department's first Latina firefighter and first female Pakistani-American firefighter.
- f) These new firefighters have joined a noble profession and a fire department with a long and proud history of protecting city residents and the thousands upon thousands of people who visit the city every year. We look forward to their positive contributions to the Atlantic City Fire Department and the community for years to come.
- g) Complimented the City and DCA's Atlantic City team for the very good Moody's and S&P credit opinions issued on the City of Atlantic City's finances. Both Moody's and S&P revised their outlook of the city to positive, citing continued strides in strengthening the city's governance, improving its financial structure, and balancing operations. They also noted the ongoing oversight of Atlantic City by the State. The positive outlook by two of the nation's top three credit agencies is nothing short of remarkable considering they were issued in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recession.
  - i. It is a testament to the tremendous progress that DCA and the City have been able to make as a result of strong collaboration and financial discipline.
  - ii. Provides validation that we remain on the right track and that the City is well-positioned for continued positive outcomes for its economy and residents.
  - iii. Believe that if it wasn't for COVID-19, the City might have even seen a ratings upgrade.
- h) We understand that much more work needs to be done, especially in the areas of economic diversification and addressing social challenges.
- i) We look forward to the recommendations report coming out of the Atlantic City Restart and Recovery Working Group that will touch on these issues.
- j) Grateful to each and every one on the Atlantic City Executive Council. This Executive Council has been doing great work to revitalize Atlantic City.
- k) While the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly dealt the city a setback, confident it will overcome these challenges to achieve the goal laid out in the Atlantic City Transition Report issued in September 2018 – to build a foundation for a shared prosperity for all.

#### **4) ATLANTIC CITY OFFICE OF PLANNING: MASTER PLAN UPDATE**

- a) City Planning Director Barbara Wooley-Dillon and Jacques Howard, assistant planning director, presented the city's 2021 master plan.
- b) Added elements of sustainability and resiliency, as well as urban agriculture to the master plan. There are new appendices, i.e. flood plain management plan, transit village plan, Ducktown neighborhood plan; municipal public access plan.
- c) Director Wooley-Dillon and Assistant Director Howard went through the highlights of the 2021 master plan.
- d) Atlantic City is the second most diverse city in New Jersey and the fifth most diverse nationwide; increasing segments of population include Asian, Latino, Bangladeshi people. 75% of the city population has a high school or better educational level.
- e) Just over 40% of documented residents are at or below poverty level, which is translated into nearly 16,000 residents out of a total of nearly 39,000 or one out of 2.5 residents.

- f) Nearly three quarters of housing units in the city are rentals. 49.5% of these rentals are in large apartment complexes or high rises.
- g) Need to provide options for homeownership, balancing affordable housing units with market rate units.
- h) With transportation/circulation, synchronization of traffic signals on major roadways in the city is needed. Road diet for Atlantic Avenue to reduce the amount of idling time for vehicles. Funding partners include the NJ Department of Transportation, the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization, and the Casino Reinvestment and Development Authority (CRDA).
- i) Need to create a capital improvement program for roads, sidewalks, flooding mitigation. Implementing road inventory maintenance program.
- j) Looking to increase environmental stewardship with projects such as boardwalk reconstruction, bulkheads, Baltic Avenue pumping station, living coastlines, microgrids. Recommend creating an environmental commission to put together plan for limiting city's carbon footprint and recycling.
- k) Master Plan recognizes that the city is concentrating on growing technologies such as wind technology, robotics, and blue economy and on taking advantage of opportunities such as Coastal Research Center (Stockton University), Innovation Zones, Opportunity Zones, Choice Neighborhood Program (Atlantic City Housing Authority), NRTC, Historic Tax Credits, Small Manufacturing Zones.
- l) Urban agriculture needed because Atlantic City is a food desert. CRDA working to bring a supermarket to city. Each month approximately 1,500 residents of Atlantic City visit soup kitchens and 3,000 households visit food pantries. In 2019, approximately 40% of students at four-year universities experienced food insecurity. Solutions include hydroponics, aquaponics, aeroponics. Also, farmers markets, both pop-up and established. Encourage community gardens and green linkages. Recommendation is to create a local source initiative to support local residents and businesses.
- m) With open space and recreation, city is home to 39 parks. Need to create master plan for each park and create a true Urban Forestry Plan. Register Atlantic City for designation as a "Tree City Beautiful."
- n) City's zoning ordinance has only four benchmark years. Ordinances have not been revised or updated to reflect new technologies and land uses. For the city's land use element, the master plan recommends a general review and tweaking of current zoning designations.
- o) Should move toward creating several site-specific redevelopment plans. City is largest landowner of property in Atlantic City. Two surplus land auctions were held in 2019. City is working to begin the process of creating targeted redevelopment plans and working on process to address the growing list of vacant and abandoned properties.
- p) Neighborhood-based planning is the way to go and way city needs to go. Partner with stakeholders to increase revitalization, more affordable housing and more homeownership.
- q) What to expect in the near future:
  - i. Create a vision statement for the entire city,
  - ii. Create a Master Plan Subcommittee,
  - iii. Public hearings on the master plan,
  - iv. Development of a Capital Improvements Plan,

- v. Final adoption of the master plan,
  - vi. Changes to zoning ordinances.
- r) Planning directors will send today's presentation to ACIPO for distribution to Atlantic City Executive Council members. Will also post presentation to the city website after January 1, 2021.

## **5) GENERAL DISCUSSION/GOOD OF THE ORDER**

- a) Welcomed Safer Quraishi, a representative of South Jersey Industries, to the Atlantic City Executive Council. Said he was happy to be a part of the application process to hopefully bring an artificial intelligence boot camp to Atlantic City through the Mark Cuban Foundation.
- b) AtlantiCare CEO Lori Herndon said the health system expects to see a shovel in the ground in February for its medical arts complex project in Atlantic City. The groundbreaking will be done virtually. They will plan for an in-person beam signing in the summer.
- c) CRDA Executive Director Matt Doherty said the CRDA board has a resolution on its December agenda to purchase the Delilah's Den property to improve quality of life in Atlantic City. CRDA will also purchase a rooming house on South Tennessee Avenue for quality of life improvement.
- d) CRDA Deputy Director Rosa Farias continues to work on drive-through food distribution events at Bader Field. The food distributions have been incredibly successful and incredibly needed during the pandemic and economic recession. CRDA has been doing the distributions since May. Estimates it will serve roughly 3,800 families this Friday. Will give out a turkey, chicken or ham to households. People need to register online to attend the food distribution. In the new year, CRDA will continue the amazing work that Community Food Bank of New Jersey has been doing with slightly different format.
- e) Steve Callender, president of the Casino Association of New Jersey, reported that casinos are down in slot machine revenue. Also, last Friday, Tropicana Atlantic City repaired and repaved Brighton Avenue on its own so now clientele and people in general have a beautiful street going to the Tropicana property.