

Business Climate Work Group Minutes

May 8, 2007

Jeff Phillips welcomed everyone and the Sarasota Association of Realtors (SARS) was thanked for hosting the meeting. The attendees introduced themselves. The meeting started with Vicente Medina giving the update on the Diversity Sub Group. He discussed the report that MCC had completed with the four focus groups last year and executive summaries of the report were passed around. The group is asking for funding this fiscal year from the EDC for a Leadership Workshop on Diversity to be held in February 2008. The committee has decided that all eight dimensions of Diversity be represented at this conference.

Diane Andrews reported on all of the activities at EDC and invited everyone to ED Rocks at Snook Haven on June 14, 2007. Hall of Fame application brochures were handed out and she said "self nominations are encouraged." Project activity and inquiries remain strong. The photo contest that the Film and Entertainment Office is conducting was talked about and attendees were urged to participate. This is a fun idea and it will help the Film Office build a library of pictures in Sarasota County that can be sent to producers and media looking at Sarasota for productions.

James Brown reported next on the Workforce Housing Sub Group. They have completed the rental assistance report and want to have some positive projects lined up before they release the report. They are working with the County and the Community Housing Trust to look at a revolving account program for the required rental and security deposits. These are the challenges that prevent people from moving into houses and apartments, not necessarily the monthly rent. The Committee has bankers at the table to assist with how this can be implemented. The CHT sent a flyer for the attendees that talked about their Lunch and Learn for employees. They go to the place of business and educate the employees about their credit rating and how to apply for housing assistance. The CHT phone number is 379.5252 for anyone who is interested. Steve Queior urged companies to take advantage of this complimentary program.

Ned Richardson reported about the Community Vision task force and the outcome from the two meetings that they have had. The vision for Sarasota County that was included in the last economic development plan was still an excellent vision, the committee decided. This committee felt that they should help carry the message to the community about why business is good for the County. The EDC will be addressing the next five year plan soon and will revisit the vision that was set forth in the current plan. This sub group will now be called "Educating the Community about Economic Development". Ned will be meeting with members of this committee to talk about funding for this effort.

Steve Queior mentioned that COBA, a local business organization has already started to address some of these challenges and should be part of this group. Some of the questions asked were: How do we measure results? What is the plan for this group? What will a public information campaign look like? The group will meet before the next meeting of the group at large which will be held August 24, 2007. Place TBD.