



## **THE CITY OF MIRAMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

**January 11, 2024**

**5:30 P.M.**

A meeting of the City of Miramar Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) took place at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 11, 2024, at the City of Miramar Economic Development & Housing (EDH) Department, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room W-202E, 2200 Civic Center Place, Miramar, Florida 33025.

### **I & II. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

The following members of the EDAB were present:

Darryl Holsendolph, Chairperson  
Trevor Wade, Vice Chairperson  
Shawn Jones

The following members of the EDAB were absent:

Peter Apol (Excused)  
Anneline Carter  
Margarita Morales (Excused)  
Irina Pinos (Excused)

A quorum was not achieved.

Also present:

Richard Hughes, Assistant Dir., EDH Dept./Staff Liaison

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- 1. Regular Board Meeting Minutes of November 7, 2023**
- 2. Regular Board Meeting Minutes of December 14, 2023**

Deferred due to the lack of a quorum.

### **IV. BOARD MEMBER ITEMS:**

Chairperson Holsendolph asked Mr. Hughes if he heard from the Urban League.

Mr. Hughes answered no; he did check with other city staff members who had contacts there, so they knew how to reach them, and involve them with the grant applicants who failed to receive grants.

### **V. NEW BUSINESS: NONE**

### **VI. OLD BUSINESS:**

#### **1. Economic Development Plan - Consultant kickoff meeting**

Mr. Hughes introduce Nicholas Torres of the Whitehouse Group; he was the consultant hired to work with staff to prepare a five-year economic development plan for the city.

Nicholas Torres, Whitehouse Group, gave the board a presentation, highlighting the following:

- The scope of the work consisted of two main tasks: community assessment; the economic strategy
- They were looking at the post-pandemic recovery, as parts of the country were recovering differently; though the city went through the economic development plan process before, in light of the pandemic and the resulting shifts in economies, they looked at how the City was impacted, and how they could help Miramar move forward from there
- They would begin the process by surveying priorities for developing goals, beginning with the City Commission; there was currently a draft survey being reviewed that would be used as an initial conversation starter when they hold a one-on-one meeting with each member of the Commission in order to understand their economic priorities, and what economic development meant to them, and how they envisioned that for the City of Miramar
- Next they would identify and create a framework for those goals, then

develop a survey that could be disseminated to the public, the business community; that is, the stakeholders

- The survey results would help establish a data-driven baseline that would show they did their due diligence, so they could stand by the resulting numbers, and why they were recommending suggested strategies, for example, pointing out industries in which Miramar was a leader, areas they saw as opportunities for growth after conducting market analyses, competitive benchmarking assessment, etc.
- They would look at other cities doing similar actions Miramar wished to take; the board would be asked to voice the names of cities they considered Miramar's peers, or cities board members saw doing things they wished to see being done by the city.
- Strategies would be developed for Miramar's overall economy, supporting those sectors Miramar already led in, and promoting a cohesive plan for businesses and residents
- The main three industries were aviation, healthcare, and hotel/hospitality; they would explore what other industries could thrive in Miramar
- Moving past the east versus west tendency, one they saw reflected in other Broward cities, and other parts of Florida; explore ways to have an overall, shared goal and vision for the whole city, or was the division so defined, that there was a need to create specific goals for each area that drove them towards a central strategy for the entire city
- The next step they were currently working on was developing the surveys, conducting a demographic and economic analysis; Miramar was a growing city, looking specifically at what transpired since March 2020
- In the benchmark assessment, they would identify key themes, and focus points for the city, looking at how Miramar stacked up to Pembroke Pines, Doral, and other larger, surrounding cities, and other cities around the State on a similar growth pattern
- Looking at peer cities in other states that were leading in similar industries as those in Miramar, such as Arizona, which often provided useful comparisons with Florida cities, as they had a similar regulatory environment
- Their scope called out for the historic innovation hub, so they brought in a small sub-consultancy for the city's project that would work directly on that strategy, and their findings would filter up as one of the goals
- They would attend future board meetings to update and get board input.

Chairperson Holsendolph mentioned going through a similar process for Wells Fargo Bank, so his concern as a resident was with traffic; transportation was economic quality of life, where people spent too much time sitting in traffic. He hoped the plan allowed for people to get in and out easily; some cities did it

backwards, and there were things happening over which they had little control, or he was not aware of anyone considering how to provide efficient access, particularly those who were not residents.

Mr. Torres agreed transportation impacted quality of life, and in the plans he reviewed for other cities tackling economic development they sought to ensure they included something that addressed the element of transportation. Locally, Broward County was the owner and operator of the public transit system, and there were state regulations directing how municipalities could and could not use funding, and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) controlled many of the city's main roadways. He remarked the question became how to have a local impact when dealing with other entities that owned and operated the transportation systems impacting the local community. This meant exploring if the city had the structure, or the direct talking points, so residents could communicate with their elected officials, have city lobbyists, and advocates to have the right conversations with the owners of the transportation systems.

Chairperson Holsendolph thought the biggest contributor to the traffic was not mentioned, that being Dade County, as Miramar's boundary abutted Dade County, an entity building a hub to the west that would bring 90,000 people a day on the road because of that developer. He questioned how the city would get around that challenge if state and county officials were unconcerned. Miramar residents were already dealing with the blasting taking place in Dade County near the city's western boundary, and traffic was already an issue in Miramar, as whatever traffic mitigation had been put forth was already outgrown. He restated his hope that traffic was a part of the conversation.

Mr. Torres concurred traffic was something the plan should consider, looking at how to respond to changes in the existing transportation infrastructure when development was occurring in the neighboring county; even if it was out of Miramar's jurisdiction, it impacted the city.

Chairperson Holsendolph mentioned the surtax dollars from Broward County, but he felt sure they were not committing those funds to what was coming; they were not concerned with being proactive to relieve west Miramar residents, and increased traffic impacts were coming. The plan to build the world's largest mall just south of west Miramar's boundary was unthinkable with regard to traffic impacts to Miramar; the present delays to that project were related to traffic plan issues. He understood engaging on the east side of Miramar for the present, but consideration needed to be given to the traffic impacts coming to west Miramar, so the city could capture that element, and seek some of the surtax dollars to address those impacts, and give Miramar residents some relief, possibly with some type of rail system.

Mr. Torres mentioned one of the tasks they would undertake was the competitive benchmark assessment via peer comparison, asking the board if they had any cities in mind they thought were comparable to the City of Miramar, including those in which they saw doing things they liked, and wished to see in the city. This would give his team something to explore, as they began that process.

Mr. Jones responded Pembroke Pines was one of Miramar's peer cities, stating the city was already intertwined with them.

Chairperson Holsendolph commented, when he heard economic development, he focused on what the city should look like in the future, and with Miramar being a leader in the aviation industry, and artificial intelligence (AI) looking to take over many people's jobs, the city had to decide what its economic engine should comprise of. Miramar had a number of industrial parks, but this was being done in other cities, with the aim being to recruit large corporations. He questioned if it would be the City Commission that would drive that initiative, deciding where the city should be five, ten years down the road. Because of his transportation concerns, he liked such cities as Chicago, New York, and even Orlando had better transportation systems. The city was vertical, but those cities could develop systems going in a variety of ways, so this was an added challenge. He thought it better to focus on cities that moved people efficiently.

Mr. Torres asked if there any peer cities in Dade or Palm Beach Counties that were comparable to Miramar.

Chairperson Holsendolph answered no, as they lacked what the city had, which was large corporations that Miramar wanted to keep in the city, and if residents were complaining about traffic issues, the corporations would eventually weigh in when they, too, became adversely affected by increased traffic, and they would expect the city to have a plan to mitigate traffic impacts. Housing in Miramar was not cheap, so the city's traffic plan had to be top notch to convince people to move to Miramar; he was unsure of the types of industries city staff would work on trying to attract to Miramar, possibly look at some AI companies.

Mr. Hughes mentioned when doing an apples-to-apples comparison with other peer cities, one typically considered population, geographic size, if the city was located in a metropolitan area, etc. Sometimes it was helpful to get out of the immediate area, particularly with regard to economic development, to look at how to attract businesses to Miramar when they could go to a similarly situated community in another state. He thought there were likely to be some suburban communities in the metro area of Dallas or Fort Worth that could be compared to Miramar. It would be better not to compare Miramar to an Orlando, or a Chicago,

as this would be way out of scale, and though some peer cities might have resources the city could not compete with, it might be better to focus on the City's strengths and weaknesses when compared to other peer cities. He said Miramar was 31 square miles, so it made no sense to compare it to a city that was ten square miles, nor should board members limit themselves to nearby peer cities, or even in the region of South Florida.

Chairperson Holsendolph thought the current, high property values were ridiculous, and it would take a certain type of taxpayer to sustain what was available in Miramar.

Mr. Hughes stated peer cities were facing similar challenges with regard to how to retain and attract people in those communities, looking at job-driven factors, whether it was to attract new businesses or residents to Miramar, such as the type of education system available. It was peer cities that had such resources that were Miramar's competitors.

Chairperson Holsendolph concurred, stating businesses considering a move to a particular city would investigate the education level of the local community, and it the type of companies would be influenced by whether the city had strong schools, universities, etc. to support their workforce. With technology moving so fast, these were factors the city must consider, whether there were jobs available within Miramar to sustain its tax base. Miramar's problem was there was no more land to do many things; there were sites with old buildings that could be redeveloped, which he believed was the plan for east Miramar, but there was also the feeling of residents in Historic Miramar that they had no wish to be disrupted.

Mr. Hughes said the subject economic development plan would be data driven; what was the data revealing, and in what direction was it pointing, what trends were emerging, and compare it to other like cities. The data should tell a story, show where the city was currently, and what were the trends, and in what direction should the city consider moving in.

Chairperson Holsendolph wished to know who would decide on the solutions, or would Mr. Torres' firm simply hand over the data, and the city would review it and make decisions for the plan.

Mr. Torres explained the plan his firm would provide would include strategies supported by certain goals; for each goal, they would provide objectives, possible actions to achieve them, etc. They would be performance measures that would allow staff to look back to see whether or not if the plan accomplished its goals.

Vice Chairperson Wade asked what the timeline was for the survey.

Mr. Torres replied, typically, the survey took a few weeks; he preferred a month to allow for more responses. Their whole project timeline was about six months, so they should be finished by summer 2024.

Chairperson Holsendolph urged Mr. Torres and staff to ensure they had equal numbers of responses from both east and west Miramar, as there were two different qualities of life and lifestyles.

Mr. Torres concurred, stating this would determine how the surveys would be distributed, so they built it into their scope to focus on east Miramar as well, so the focus was not only on what was happening in the Town Center area, and further west.

Mr. Jones agreed, as a resident making \$30,000.00 a year would have different needs than someone making \$100,000.00 a year.

Chairperson Holsendolph thought it would be a challenge to get people to release that level of detail in a survey, unless the survey questioned provided a range of household income.

Mr. Torres understood, stating the goal of the survey was to encourage residents and business owners to participate.

Chairperson Holsendolph asked how this would be accomplished.

Mr. Torres responded, as his team and he worked through the project, they would meet with Mr. Hughes and his staff to discuss the best methods of getting the survey out to the local community.

Mr. Hughes felt this would be a challenge, as, historically, the local community's survey response levels tended to be low.

Mr. Torres thought it important to contact various community entities to advise on the best methods by which to get the survey out; in a survey sent out in Pennsylvania, they focused on five different groups: employers, university students, municipal officials, human service agencies, and they targeted and identified somebody who could help in each category who could be their point of contact to get the surveys out within each of those groups, including using any contact list they already had. The survey would contain no more than ten questions, as any more than that would likely deter many from responding.

Chairperson Holsendolph remarked on communicating to survey participants that their input would help the city develop an economic plan for the next five to ten years; it would be a challenge to find ways to get people to respond.

Mr. Torres agreed this was very important, hence his team starting off with doing one-on-one meetings with the elected officials, and city leadership.

Chairperson Holsendolph commented that each member of the Commission should treat the economic plan, and the survey created to get local community input as if it were a campaign, one to mobilize community participation for a better Miramar. Each elected official had core people who were key players in Miramar, and who could supply great data.

## **2. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Marketing Value Proposition (IT Sector)**

Mr. Hughes reminded the board of a past presentation from a consultant his staff and he worked with to help the city identify the different sectors in Miramar the city wished to market to outside of South Florida, and the U.S. One of the sectors staff asked the consultant to follow up with was software and IT services. He referred to the one-page handout distributed to the board summarizing in an easy format the strengths and major points the consultant recommended the city focus on when reaching out to the companies outside the U.S., as a way to attract their investment to Miramar. He gave a PowerPoint presentation, reviewing the four main factors on the handout: location of the city, Miramar's growing community and strong workforce, the City's current smart city initiatives, and incentives for quality of life. This would be used as a marketing piece to reach people outside the U.S. who wished to know about Miramar. Mr. Hughes stated, with the completion of the second part of the consultant's work, his staff had information to work with Marketing staff to prepare various media pieces, whether it was for placing an advertisement in a business magazine, use the one-pager as is at conferences, or include the information in some other publication. Some of the sectors carried over into other sectors, such as quality of life. He thought they did a good job, focusing in on the selling points of the city that was data driven. The consultant provided recommendations on strengthening the aviation sector that were along the same lines as those for the IT sector.

Chairperson Holsendolph asked who, in the city, chose which business sectors/companies the City should target.

Mr. Hughes replied that those decisions were made by city administration, and the elected officials. The reason for hiring the consultant was to help in the



decision on which sectors the city should pursue, as opposed to thinking something was a good idea; the company helped to narrow the focus on why certain sectors should be pursued. He reminded the board in the first part of the consultant's study, they identified aviation, software, and financial services as the three sectors with the strongest data-driven information. City administration had yet to see the results of the second part, and staff would be putting something together to present the information to the Commission, and he expected them to be supportive of the findings. Mr. Hughes noted the city lacked the capability the consulting firm had to access the data, and information on what companies were looking for, and how much investment was taking place, as they constantly tracked that information, including internationally.

Chairperson Holsendolph thought sometimes the message got lost because of something city staff decided to do that throws it off, and this created a disconnect when speaking about marketing without looking at housing, particularly when the department was titled Economic Development & Housing, particularly if the intention was to pursue companies outside of Miramar.

Mr. Hughes pointed out this was the reason housing was touched on to some degree in the quality-of-life factor shown on the handout. He appreciated the feedback, and staff would look at reworking the marketing products, so there was no confusion that took away from what the subject effort sought to accomplish.

### **3. Miramar Business Academy Grant Application Update**

Mr. Hughes commented that the city would recognize the graduates who were Miramar residents at a commission meeting, as they were the only graduates eligible to apply for the grant; at present, 30 graduates indicated they would attend.

Mr. Jones mentioned he had a few associates from outside Miramar go through the course, and he told them if they graduated and received a grant, they had to use it to open their business in Miramar.

Mr. Hughes clarified if the graduate planned to use the grant monies to open a business in Miramar, they would qualify to apply for the grant, which was for up to \$10,000.00; \$250,000.00 was set aside for the program. It would be tricky, because there was the issue of how many people from outside Miramar who received the grant would actually open their business in the city as promised. He thought there was more of a probability of this occurring if the grantee was a Miramar resident. For others who graduated from the program, the city would email them their certificate of completion. He noted staff was working on putting the grant application online, so they could open it up for the 68 Miramar resident

graduates to apply. The board would be notified of the commission meeting at which the graduates would be recognized.

## **VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS & INFORMATION:**

1. Coffee, Chocolate & Culture Expo, February 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Miramar Cultural Center (MCC)

Mr. Hughes noted the subject event came out of a Miramar Sister Cities initiative, stating the first night was a VIP function, and they were ticketed events, so any board members wishing to attend should contact him to receive two free tickets.

2. Doing Business with Panama

Mr. Hughes referred to the flyer he distributed to the board; Commissioner Colbourne was hosting an event on Tuesday, January 30, 2024, 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

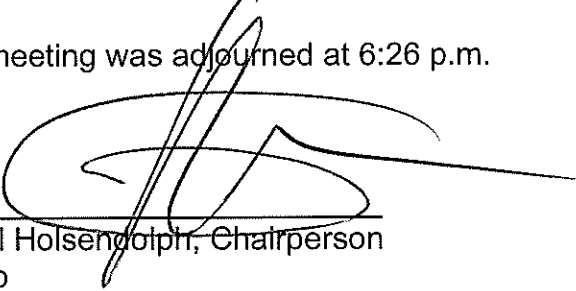
3. Miramar Pembroke Pines Chamber of Commerce Ribbon Cuttings - Turner Construction, Wednesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 4:30 p.m. at 2906 Executive Way.

The Krazy Vegan, Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 a.m., at 18421 Miramar Parkway

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT:**

Next meeting: Thursday, February 8, 2024 @ 5:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:26 p.m.



Darryl Holsendolph, Chairperson  
DH/cp