

Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

WORK SESSION

City Hall Council Chambers
57 N. Liberty Street
Cumberland, MD 21502

Tuesday, December 14, 2021
4:40 p.m.

PRESENT: Raymond M. Morriss, President; Council Members: Richard Cioni, Eugene Frazier, Joseph George and Laurie Marchini.

ALSO PRESENT: Ken Tressler, Interim City Administrator; Marjorie Woodring, City Clerk; Matt Miller, CEDC Executive Director; Stu Czapski, Economic Development Specialist; Mike Getty; Kyle Talente and Matt Cardin, RKG Associates; Jonathan Hutcherson, CEDC Board Chair

Media: Greg Larry, Cumberland Times-News

I. UPDATE FROM RKG ASSOCIATES – FINAL FINDINGS, DRAFT CEDC STRATEGIC PLAN REASSESSMENT

Matt Miller introduced once again Kyle from RKG Associates, and said the final findings he would go over today sets expectations internally for both the CEDC and the City. Mr. Talente presented a PowerPoint, said they would go over goals, implementation strategies, and then get into discussions.

GOALS

- Develop Council-endorsed economic plan vision
- Enhance coordination and cooperation among partners
- Increase public support for ED vision
- Empower CEDC to create/rehabilitate new development opportunities
- Continue to build Cumberland's image
- Improve Cumberland as a place to live/work/play
- Create and retain jobs in a variety of industries

ORGANIZATION OF STRATEGIES

(Current Capacity Recommendations)

- Business retention and expansion
- Development of existing efforts

(Additional Capacity Recommendations)

- Marketing, communication and outreach
- Business recruitment and attraction

(Operational Recommendations)

- Organization and coordination
- Economic Development toolbox

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

- Implement annual business survey
- Engage industry leaders from key market segments in quarterly roundtables
- Execute business outreach program
- Execute business networking events
- Maintain role in connecting businesses with workforce

ASSET DEVELOPMENT

- Create commercial node plans like the downtown plan
- Inventory and market available buildings and land
- Continue leadership in PPP real estate projects
- Maximize uses on underutilized land
- Promote development of housing diversity

MARKETING COMMUNICATION, AND OUTREACH

- Enhance CEDC website
- Develop marketing materials to sell Cumberland
- Create regular ED content for distribution
- Proactively engage community
- Create ED development dashboard
- Hire a marketing specialist

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT AND ATTRACTION

- Create small business and entrepreneurial program
- Hire an entrepreneurial development specialist
- “Ride herd” larger-scale business recruitment

ORGANIZATION AND COORDINATION

- Continue to build partnership with County
- Streamline ED efforts in Cumberland
- Continue to build and strengthen partnerships

TOOLBOX DEVELOPMENT

- Regulatory tools
- Financial tools

CURRENT STAFFING AND RESOURCES

- Executive Director
- ED Manager
- Main Street Manager
- Board of Directors

NEXT STEPS

- Marketing Director
- Ombudsman
- Entrepreneurial Development Specialist
- How to Augment Staffing Needs

II. DISCUSSION

Mr. Talente opened the floor for questions and comments. There was discussion on the price tag of the investment in personnel, if using all of Mr. Talente's recommendations of 3 full-time professionals in marketing. Mr. Talente advised \$250K - \$300K annually. Mayor Morriss said they will have to weigh the benefits and the right mix.

There was discussion on annual business surveys and visits per week, some maybe by members of City Council. Mr. Talente said he thinks some business owners would appreciate the attention, while others may have a mistrust of government and won't be as excited, and discussed the reality and goals of being available for conversations. He stated that, being a small community, there may be value in Council working as liaisons.

Mr. Miller advised that pre-Covid, the CEDC had a robust business retention schedule, and got good information from businesses on recommendations, staffing needs, etc. Mayor Morriss suggested also using CEDC Board members. There was also discussion regarding more responsibilities by bringing the DDC into the CEDC. Mr. Talente advised that it would probably be negligible, and said it creates more benefits than costs.

There was discussion on the potential for collaboration with the CEDC and the County, to bring efforts together. Mr. Talente suggested that co-funding a staff member could be done in the short-term, without a full merger. There was also more discussion about salary for full-time positions and consulting being approximately \$250K. It was mentioned that the amount seemed low, and it was noted that figure did not account for health insurance.

Mr. Talente stated that he realized the City may not be able to take this on all at one time, and suggested looking for ways to mitigate or combine costs. He also advised to bring staff on as a single body and move forward, and said to focus on their recommendations for doing something, and maybe look to get there a different way. It was also suggested to work in phases and to look at all the avenues of collaboration.

Performance measurements for the staff of the CEDC was discussed, along with the economic development dashboard, how to set the right metrics to achieve results, and how it can be measured and tracked successfully.

There was discussion about marketing the City of Cumberland, and about directing that marketing to what location. Mr. Talente advised that in his opinion the highest chances of success are DC-Metro, Baltimore-Metro, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and secondly, upstate NY.

Greg Larry, Cumberland Times-News, discussed the new FedEx distribution center coming with 250 jobs, and asked how the City could piggy-back on that to attract more and expand on that. Mr. Talente advised that one of the biggest challenges is that the number of large land assets is extremely limited in Cumberland, which limits how many businesses like that it can attract. He

stated that annexation could assist in that type of development, but said mid-scale would be better at a regional level.

There was discussion about vertical building and upper story development. Mr. Talente said they strongly endorse the City considering activating the upper stories in the Baltimore Street area. He advised that it would also benefits businesses along Baltimore Street by bringing more people downtown. He stated that the challenge would be if the building owner could generate enough rent to offset the costs of renovation, and said the City needs to offer the right incentives.

There was discussion about what is new and what looks good in Cumberland to RKG & Associates, since they first came here in 2014. Mr. Talente mentioned the Footer Building, Rolling Mill, investment in new land assets to attract development, the creation of the CEDC, the City being more focused on economic development, and its success in moving initiative forward. He added that bringing them back for a strategic plan update is a tremendous step forward, and means the community has bought into the concept of economic development.

III. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m. With a **motion** from Councilman George, seconded by Councilman Cioni, the meeting reverted back to a Closed Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie A. Woodring
City Clerk

Minutes approved April 29, 2022