

Pima County Small Business Commission

Thursday, July 21, 2022
Video Conference / Telephonic Meeting

MINUTES OF MEETING

Commission Members Present

Josh Jacobsen
Carlos Ruiz, Chair
Raul Aguirre
Ken Goodman
Shelby Collier
Janay Arenas, Vice Chair
Ken Blumenthal
Gabrielle David

Commission Members Absent

Jeffrey Wood
Moniqua Lane

Pima County Staff Present

Jan Leshar, County Administrator
Carmine DeBonis, Deputy County Administrator
Heath Vescovi-Chiordi, Economic Development
Patrick Cavanaugh, Economic Development
Kelle Maslyn, Economic Development

Guests in attendance

Hon. Supervisor Steve Christy, District 4
Beth Borozan, District 4
Maria Klucarova, District 3
Nicholas McCullough, District 5
Kim Challender, District 1

1. Call to Order

The meeting began at 3:03pm.

2. Roll Call - establish quorum

Johanna Encinas conducted roll call to start the meeting. Commission quorum was confirmed.

3. Chair's Report (Ruiz)

a. Welcome Pima County Administrator Jan Leshar

Chair Ruiz welcomed County Administrator Jan Leshar and he briefly discussed the recent meeting Chair Ruiz and Commissioner Jacobsen had with Ms. Leshar. He then stated he would ask Ms. Leshar to address the Commission.

County Administrator Jan Leshar expressed her appreciation of being part of the meeting and reiterated Chair Ruiz's description of the meeting with Commissioners that occurred a few weeks ago. She informed the commission she had a few topics she wanted to discuss, but first wanted Economic Development Director Heath Vescovi-Chiordi to make some announcements to the Commission regarding internal staff changes.

Mr. Vescovi-Chiordi briefly discussed with the Commission the changes in the Economic Development Department. He informed the Commission that Kelle Maslyn would now be the new coordinator for the Small Business Commission and Patrick Cavanaugh would take a greater role in the department's business attraction, retention and expansion activities.

Ms. Leshar thanked Mr. Cavanaugh for staffing the Small Business Commission for the last ten years and welcomed Ms. Maslyn to her new assignment. Then she moved to the topics she wanted to discuss with the Commission:

- The COVID-19 policy review task force proposal that was rejected by the Board of Supervisors
- A memo is going to the Deputy County Administrators from Ms. Leshar on this topic
- Discussions with Deputy County Administrators – all relevant Pima County Departments should continue to be aligned with the Small Business Commission
- Other Pima County Boards, Commissions and Committees that would impact or benefit from Small Business Commission expertise should also engage with the Commission
- Health Department and permitting function for restaurants should be engaged
- The County's response to COVID evaluated and determining how the evaluation can be accomplished; and identifying other resources to assist the Commission
- Determining what the County has learned from COVID-19 in order to not make the same mistakes
- Pima County will look at Health Department analysis and research and use this work done by others to assist the Commission

Ms. Leshar asked if there were any questions from the Commission or other topics the Commission would like to discuss.

Commissioner Jacobsen stated he would like a more defined role for the Commissioners in order to better assist the County and its purpose.

Ms. Leshar reiterated the current changes to the Commission and supporting department with Ms. Maslyn and Mr. Vescovi-Chiordi joining economic development and that this was a good time to gain understanding of the new direction including determining where the Commission was headed and better defining its roles.

Commissioner Blumenthal expressed his appreciation to Ms. Leshar for being at the Small Business Commission meeting and discussed some of his work as previous Chair of the Small Business Commission. He also provided an overview of the presentation they had given during the Board of Supervisors meeting, experiences the Commission had during COVID-19 and emphasized the Commission's duty to advise the Board of Supervisors.

Commissioner Goodman expressed his gratitude to Ms. Leshar for being present and willingness to listen. He also agreed with Commissioner Blumenthal's comments and believed the Commission as a whole was a solid group.

Commissioner Aguirre suggested it was important to get feedback from other Boards, Commissions and Committees and to get more information from others organizations that are funding and helping small businesses. He said working with the Health Department would be important as well.

Commissioner Jacobsen advised Ms. Leshner of the problem small businesses are experiencing with crime. He described the homelessness and mental health issues they face every day in their communities and their businesses, including vandalism and drug use. He gave an overview of the day to day problems small businesses have to deal with such and clean up or repairs due to crime-related problems.

Ms. Leshner stated Pima County was at a critical point dealing with homelessness and addiction. She informed the Commission she has been talking with Michael Ortega, City of Tucson Manager, and developing ideas on what they can do to help address the problem in Tucson and Pima County.

After general discussion between Commissioners and Ms. Leshner, it was recommended to have a joint meeting with the Small Business Commission and the Board of Health to get the right organizations and groups together to help with some of the issues discussed.

6. Approval of Meeting Minutes (Ruiz)

a. May 19, 2022

Motion: Commissioner Blumenthal moved, seconded by Commissioner Aguirre, to approve May 19, 2022 meeting minutes. Approved 7-0.

b. May 24, 2022

Motion: Commissioner Blumenthal moved, seconded by Commissioner Goodman, to approve May 24, 2022 meeting minutes. Approved 7-0.

7. Coordinator's Report & Updates (Coordinator Patrick Cavanaugh)

a. Status of PCSBC in-person meetings (standing agenda item)

Mr. Cavanaugh informed the Commission of the closing of the County's Administration East building where the Commission historically has held its in-person meetings. The closing is due to a multi-year remodeling project. Mr. Cavanaugh was exploring different locations with free surface parking to present for the Commission's consideration, such as the Pima County Housing Center at 810 W. Congress. He will now turn that location search over to Ms. Maslyn and recommended the Commission continue to meet via videoconference until a suitable location is identified and approved by the Commission.

b. Pima County's economic recovery during the pandemic (standing agenda item)

Mr. Cavanaugh gave a brief overview of the pandemic job recovery in Pima County and Arizona. He informed the Commission the state of Arizona's data released that morning indicated Tucson MSA (Pima County) was 88%, Flagstaff MSA 90% and Prescott MSA 115%, Lake Havasu/Kingman MSA 143% and Phoenix MSA at 120%. This data shows job losses and gains for the pandemic period covering February 2020 to June 2022. A recent meeting with an economist from the University of Arizona indicated a disproportion loss of jobs in the Professional and Business Services sector that would account for the slow recovery in Pima County. Both the University and Pima County economic development were working to further understand the losses in this broad sector.

- c. Pima County 2022-2025 Economic Development Strategy planning process

Mr. Cavanaugh informed the Commission there was an item later on the agenda that will allow for a broader discussion with the Commission.

- d. Questions from the Commission

The entire Commission expressed their farewells and appreciation to Mr. Cavanaugh.

8. Unfinished Business

- a. Discussion/Action: Date of presentation of 2021 and 2020 Small Business Awards at Pima County Board of Supervisors Meeting (Ruiz)

Mr. Cavanaugh explained the delays in getting the item scheduled for the Board of Supervisors agenda. He recommended the presentation occur at the September 6, 2024 Board meeting. Chair Ruiz advised the Commission he would like to have this presented to the Board sometime in September. Due to time constraints they would discuss this at the next Commission meeting.

- b. Discussion/Action: Small Business Commission input into the Pima County Economic Development Strategic Plan (Ruiz)

Mr. Cavanaugh informed the Commission that the Economic Development department was currently working with a consultant in developing the strategic plan. Mr. Cavanaugh suggested the Commission designate someone to attend to meetings and report back to the Commission as well as appoint an alternate Commissioner. He stated the consultant would like to have the most experienced Commissioner work within the Small Business stakeholder group and the department was respectfully requesting Commissioner Goodman's designation as the liaison.

Action: Commissioner David moved, seconded by Commissioner Blumenthal, to nominate Commissioner Goodman to represent the Small Business Commission during the stakeholder's meetings for the Economic Development Strategic Plan; with Commissioner Jacobsen designated as an alternate if Commissioner Goodman was unavailable.

Mr. Cavanaugh suggested to have a standing item on the Commission's agenda for reports from Commissioner Goodman.

9. New Business (Discussion/Action)

- a. Evaluation/Examination of the purpose of the Small Business Commission (Ruiz)

Chair Ruiz asked the Commissioners to discuss this item and he would go around the table to get everyone's input

Commissioner Arenas stated she believed this was a good time to repurpose this Commission and for everyone to get a feel and sense of the Commission's direction.

Commissioner Aguirre agreed with Vice Chair Arenas and summarized the suggested direction from County Administrator Jan Leshar and new communication opportunities

Commissioner Collier wanted to add to Commissioner Jacobsen comments on homelessness and the issue with restaurants and noted 16 Starbuck's stores were closing due to safety and homelessness issues and suggested the government should provide public restrooms.

Chair Ruiz closed by saying with this new direction suggested by County Administrator Jan Leshar and Mr. DeBonis should get them set in the right direction and broaden the Commission's purpose.

10. JTED Update (Goodman)

Chair Ruiz deferred the item to next month's meeting due to time constraints.

11. Restaurant Update (Jacobsen, Collier)

Chair Ruiz added this standing item for Commissioner Jacobsen and Commissioner Collier and it will be discussed more fully at next month's meeting.

12. Commissioner Updates

No Updates

13. Agenda Items for next SBC meeting: Thursday, August 18, 2022 @ 3pm, MST

Chair Ruiz suggested to the Commission that instead of having a guest the Commission have an agenda item for reports regarding the Pima County Development Strategic Plan and any updates from the County Administration Office.

14. Adjournment

Motion: Commissioner Aguirre moved, seconded by Commissioner Jacobsen to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed 7-0 and the meeting adjourned at 4:55pm.