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MINUTES
COLUMBIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Tuesday, February 14, 2017
4303 Route 9
Hudson, New York

A regularly scheduled meeting of Columbia Economic Development Corporation's (CEDC) Workforce Development and Education Committee was held at their offices located at 4303 Route 9, Hudson, NY 12534 on February 14, 2017. The meeting was called to order at 8:34am by Mr. Jones, CEDC Chairman.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived/ Departed
James Calvin	Committee Member	Present	
Tish Finnegan	Committee Member	Present	Departed 9:32am
Triona Fritsch	Committee Chair	Present	
Kate Johns	Committee Member	Present	Arrived at 8:44am
Tony Jones	Committee Member	Present	
James Lapenn	Committee Member	Excused	
John Lee	Committee Member	Present	
Michael Polemis	Committee Member	Present	
Maria Suttmeier	Committee Member	Present	Departed 9:35am
F. Michael Tucker	President/CEO	Present	
Andy Howard	Counsel	Present	
Lisa Drahushuk	Administrative Supervisor	Present	
Erin McNary	Bookkeeper	Present	
Ed Stiffler	Economic Developer	Present	
Carol Wilber	Marketing Director	Present	

Mr. Jones reminded everyone the genesis of the committee was the strategic plan and the business retention visits last year showing difficulty finding employees. He cited the number of local, state and federal programs operating in this space and stated that CEDC should not duplicate existing efforts, noting there appeared to be room to assist with apprenticeships or internships via county high schools that would make local businesses more visible and attractive to students. He hoped a pilot program could be in place in 2017, and expand in 2018 based on experience.

Election of Chair:
Mr. Jones suggested Ms. Fritsch as Chair stating she represented a sizable business with a commitment to their workers. *Mr. Jones made a motion, seconded by Mr. Lee. Carried.*

Committee Discussion:
Ms. Fritsch thanked the committee. Mr. Tucker stated it was important to have people with skills and talent in order to attract new business. He reviewed the spreadsheet containing the enrollment figures for public and private schools located in Columbia County. He noted it didn't include the Pine Plains public school district, or the Berkshire Union Free School District, a specialized school district.

Mr. Tucker stated the Strategic Plan's fourth pillar, workforce and education, stated "CEDC will facilitate networking and collaboration among the County's educational, business and government institutions to stimulate purposeful alignment of educational offerings and business needs. Objective: Create an environment that leverages Columbia County's "education to workplace" pipeline."

Mr. Tucker stated he recently met Kelly Ann Radzik the new Director of Applied Learning and Job Development at Columbia Greene Community College, as well as with Joan Rogers, Work Based Learning Coordinator at Questar III, to discuss partnering on workforce and education initiatives
Mr. Tucker stated he, Mr. Jones and Mr. Polemis had met with representatives of the Berkshire Taconic Foundation. He stated CEDC was putting together a proposal for a grant in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce for a Summer High School Leadership Proogram. He stated the pilot program would be for 12 – 16 high school students for a 6-8 session 2.5 hour program in the summer for a mini-leadership program. He stated funds would be used to hire a teacher to teach soft skills, introduce to a civic organization and visit some business locations, in order to expose to different types of experiences.

He reviewed the percentages of graduating students and the types of diplomas for the county. He stated the numbers from 2016 were consistent with 2015 numbers. Dr. Suttmeier noted the 2016 numbers didn't include the August graduates. Mr. Tucker reviewed the median incomes of the graduates' families along with other census data. He noted it would be helpful to determine what the graduates did after graduation, work or school.

Mr. Tucker referenced the Saratoga County Prosperity Partnership survey asking the most pressing issues employers face. The three top results were available workforce, skills gap and attracting talent. When asked what characteristics or skills make an employee successful in the company, the top three answers were: reliability, good communications and ability to work within a team environment.
Ms. Fritsch stated she was trying to determine a way for CEDC to become a connector, to open up a network, and to ensure the creative economy was included. Mr. Tucker stated CEG had done a study while he was there, which showed Hudson was the third in the country, behind Brooklyn and Taos,

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New Mexico, in the number of people per capita involved in the creative economy. He stated nearly every company has someone that is doing a creative job. Ms. Fritsch suggested defining the parameters. Mr. Polemis felt the funding should be defined. He felt it would be impossible to present ideas without knowing the amount and limitations of the funding.
Dr. Suttmeier suggested doing an outline. She stated currently the schools have the programs but no work study coordinator and no capacity to have current staff members coordinate. She noted unions have had issues with internships and businesses would be prohibited from offering a paid internship. Ms. Finnegan suggested the business offer the position, which is paid for by a sponsoring business. Mr. Tucker questioned if it could be set up through a third party. Mr. Jones asked Dr. Suttmeier if the structure currently existed. She stated Hudson City School District participated in the YES (Youth Employment Services) program with 25 students. She stated the program took a great deal of time to coordinate.

Mr. Polemis suggested that the start should be small and manageable and not try to solve the entire problem. He stated Columbia Land Conservancy had received donor money to do their summer program with 20 participants. He suggested perhaps that a program could be done under CEDC. He stated transportation was a big issue, but the program gave the participants a window into the world.

Mr. Tucker asked what population would be best served by the program. Mr. Lee asked from the employer's side how many graduates would stay and work in the county. He reminded the committee that similar meetings had taken place before resulting in programs that didn't necessarily lead to jobs for the participants. He suggested looking at the available jobs in the county. Mr. Polemis cautioned against trying to solve the problem with broad strokes. He suggested starting with one or two and increasing after success could be shown.

Mr. Tucker asked which age group should be targeted. Ms. Finnegan suggested 13-15 year olds. Dr. Suttmeier stated the graduation requirements had been changed to allow workforce training as one part of the graduation requirements. Dr. Suttmeier stated Hudson School District offered PACE Lab where participants clocked in, assembled and finished a project. She stated it taught basic job skills. She noted there was currently no room to expand the program.

Mr. Tucker asked if the consensus of the committee was to target the 14 to 18 year old group and to partner on the college age group with the college.
Mr. Calvin stated the high school age group was not the only pool of workers available. He noted a large number of citizens work outside the county. Mr. Tucker stated once all data has been gathered and organized, it could be determined who needs assistance. It was also noted that there are many underemployed workers, along with those who are unemployed, who could benefit from addition workforce training programs.

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Ms. Fritsch asked how often the Committee should meet. The Committee felt they should meet at least monthly.

With no further business to come before the committee and no public present, Ms. Fritsch called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. *A motion was made by Mr. Calvin, seconded by Mr. Jones to adjourn the meeting. Carried. The meeting was adjourned at 9:48am.*

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Drahushuk