



Joint Newark & Essex County Business and Economic Development Committee

Tuesday, July 7, 2015

Essex County College-4th Floor Multipurpose Room B

9:00 am – 11:00 am

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Introductions
Mitch Cahn, CEO/President, Unionwear
- II. Approval of Minutes
- III. Schedule Calendar for remainder of year
- IV. Guest Speaker—Charles Rosen, Newark Farms Inc.
- V. Brainstorm content of Marketing Package
 - a. Who are the target recipients
 - i. Examples of large scale employment opportunities outside of County
 - ii. Examples of new businesses moving into County
 - iii. Examples of existing County businesses expanding or replacing employees
 - b. What will the Marketing Package Show?
 - i. Examples of how the workforce system can fund training potential hires specific to the business needs
 - ii. Examples of how the Workforce System can screen potential hires for soft skills
 - iii. Examples of how the Workforce System can provide placement services
 - iv. Highlight federal, state and other hiring incentives, such as OJT funds and customized training grants
 - v. Examples of how the Workforce System can work with local and state authorities to make sure that transportation options are available
 - c. Testimonials and Success Stories
 - i. Brainstorm list of success stories in each area of target recipients as well as each area of Workforce System services
 - d. How will marketing package be disseminated
 - e. Create timeline for completion of this project with goals set for each remaining meeting in 2015
- VI. Adjourn Meeting—Next Scheduled Meeting



Joint Newark & Essex County Business and Economic Development Committee
Essex County College- Training Inc.
Thursday, July 7, 2015 at 9:00 am
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Adam Albanese
Al Bundy
Mitch Cahn
Apryl Caldwell
Al-Qadr Camillo
Mitra Choudhury
Deborah Collins
Adrianna Crawford
Joe Epps
Lincoln Farquharson
Barbara George-Johnson

Chip Hallock
Dexter Hendricks
Davetta Lane
Tolu Lanrewaju
Diana Longo
William Parrish
John Perry
Charles Rosen
Bahvna Tailor
Joyce Wilson-Harley
Yuemeng Zhang

Meeting Called to Order: Chairperson Mitch Cahn

Mr. Cahn called the meeting to order. He announced that he has proudly accepted full chairmanship of the committee. He communicated that his goals are to accomplish the project discussed at the retreat and to continue conversations discussed at the June meeting. His hope is to accomplish these goals by the end of 2015. He emphasized that most of the work happens during the two hour monthly meetings, and added that there be homework. He expressed that off-mission discussion and off topic projects should be tabled and possibly delegated to another committee. A roundtable roll call was conducted to introduce all meeting attendees.

Motion, Approve Meeting Minutes

Mr. Cahn asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the last meeting. A motion was introduced, seconded and moved. Minutes were approved.

Guest Speaker- Charles Rosen, Newark Farms, Inc.

Charles Rosen sits on Mayor Baraka's Business Advisory Council. He has decades of experience running an international advertising agency. He started a business in workforce development and environmental repair within Newark a few years ago. The model for this business was to build a for profit business that treated people with dignity, paid living wages, provided soft skills training, life skill coaching and repaired damage to the Earth, simultaneously. Most of the company's work was in agriculture with a primary focus in urban agriculture. The company realized that in order to do the work of the city, it needed to establish a base outside of the city; a 120 acre farm was purchased in Hunterdon County, Alexander Township. Its mission was to reignite the Newark workforce. The vast majority of its employees are formerly incarcerated men and women from Newark. The agricultural component of this project contains 25 acres of orchards for food production, leading into a commercial enterprise which involves a commercial kitchen with a bakery. The organization is working on a model where it trains individuals to have an ownership position in the agricultural business that feeds the bakery business. The company is developing a network of industries that aim to serve the Newark community, while teaching Newarkers a trade. Mr. Rosen spoke of the mindset shift that he sees from workers who progress through the program. The shift goes from their immediate crisis of getting a job, buying food and affording rent to functioning in an environment where they can develop the capacity to literally take a breather, while gaining skills in conflict resolution, fiscal literacy and communication. The workers also learn how food impacts their ability to work and they formulate a sense of community and family by preparing meals together. Mr. Rosen expressed that when and if they come back to the city, workers are motivated and tremendously armed with the strength, financial capacity and desire to serve their community. Right now, there are about 20 employees who are from the Newark re-entry community. The goal is to expand the program to the veteran and immigrant population and to bring on an additional 150 employees within the next two years. The company uses transporting employees as another revenue stream for one of its partnering organization called Prodigal Sons and Daughters, a re-entry organization started at Rahway State Prison. Twenty bucks is deducted from each worker's pay to cover transportation cost. Outside of Prodigal Sons and Daughters, there are three others that are outsourced and paid to transport workers through carpooling. The company is self-financed through revenue streams that are viable enough to support its activities. Every crop grown is a high margin crop or crops that can have value added to them i.e. apple to cider, sauces and pies. Mr. Rosen expressed that the company wants to be self-sustaining, although there are potential opportunities with the USDA and the Department of Corrections. One of the major goals is to shift participants from dependency to entrepreneurial opportunities that can stream revenue back into the system. The committee members were fascinated by Mr. Rosen's presentation. Mr. Cahn added that if the City had twenty programs like this one, our unemployment rate would be at about 7%.

Meeting Dates

It was confirmed that committee meetings will be held on the 1st Thursday of every month except for months when there are scheduled board meetings. Calendar invites will be sent out identifying the remaining committee meeting dates for 2015.

Committee Project

Initially, there was confusion about this joint effort because the NWIB and ECWIB are two separate entities with separate budgets and separate contracts. The project sub-committee questioned if their effort was in sales or in promoting the WIBs. Mitch clarified that the focus should be on “the workforce and its features.” He spoke of how the lack of customized training makes it more challenging for us to sell our workforce. One of the goals for the committee project is to formulate and design a cost efficient one page marketing piece that sells Newark and Essex County’s workforce. The structure of the piece contains the committee name, the slogan (Let Us Work for You) and the committee’s mission statement. Its body of content should appeal to a variety of markets and can be disseminated a number of ways (i.e. NWIB, NCEDC, City of Newark and Essex County webpages, handout form). Committee members agreed that we must determine who we are marketing to; target markets should appeal to the business community, vendors, non-profit organizations, educational institutions and any companies/organizations that can provide opportunities for our workforce. It was also discussed that we should market to businesses in emerging and growing fields. One important question that the committee raised was, “Who do we serve?” As a committee, we serve Essex County’s workforce and the businesses in and around the county. One of the committee members mentioned the importance of making our workforce attractive to the business community by wrapping a powerful brand around our workers, educational institutions and communities. We must convince employers that our community is equipped. Mr. Rosen used the example of the hotel development project in Montclair. He spoke of Montclair being a progressive community with a focus on social and economic diversity, making it the reason why people want to live there and open businesses there. He stated that this committee should be able to speak powerfully on behalf of the Hotel Indigo model and its success.

Committee Business

One of the committee members mentioned the fact that more focus should be put on Newark since transportation has been a barrier for many job seekers. He spoke about the massive development currently occurring in Newark and emphasized that we must examine the skills of our workforce. He urged that we must acknowledge the huge gaps that make our workforce unattractive to contractors and Union officials. He advised that Essex County Schools would seemingly be able to provide pre-apprenticeship training to help close these gaps. He stressed that opportunities are being lost because many job candidates have the will and availability for work, yet they lack the essential skills for success.

Mr. Cahn communicated that one of the focuses of the project is to package the following elements together. The focus will be on large scale employment projects, businesses relocating to the county/city and business expansions.

The following questions were raised:

- Is there a universal understanding of who is in the potential pool of job candidates?
- What are we selling?
- What are the skill sets of potential job candidates?

-Do we have job candidates who are able to hit the ground running?

Mr. Cahn advised that the answers to these questions should be addressed through the committee's project. He stressed that businesses must know that we have a system that has been designed to train candidates so that they can choose from a pool of work ready candidates. He suggested that businesses that are likely to recruit from our workforce are those that seek a specific and massive pool of candidates.

Lincoln Farquharson articulated the importance of networking and sharing information amongst each other. He charged that the committee with formulating a directory of organizations and services (represented within the committee) that can be used as a resource for recruitment and referral opportunities. He also suggested that the committee create a form identifying trainers, vendors, their services, their client population, their client criteria, calendar operation, and address. Bahvna Tailor added that the form should be sent to all vendors who provide services to our workforce. Once collected, the forms will be sorted and classified by industry. Mitch suggested that this would be a great project for the Vendor Sub-Committee; they can put together an endless list of trainers and potential training organizations. This will prove to be beneficial as we become a conduit for funding through customized training grants (i.e. WIOA, NJDOL, Re-Entry, ect.).

Joe Epps suggested that as previously discussed, we need to bring in private businesses so that we can find out what essential qualities and skills sets are required of their workforce. He emphasized that this should be done before we send out information on what we can offer.

Mitra Choudhury told the committee about how Senator Payne approached Essex County College in reference to Hotel Indigo. Senator Payne expressed the need to train a workforce for positions that would be available at the hotel. In turn, the college hired experts, developed a curriculum and was able to get funding. Mitra stressed that if employers commit to hiring a workforce, money can be acquired for customized training through funding and grants. One of the most common funding sources is the Department of Labor. Bahvna Tailor added that many employers are not aware that educational institutions and training organizations are able to create customized training for a specific workforce. The committee discussed how the concept of customized training and testimonials from employers who have tapped into the workforce could increase employment opportunities for our workforce. William Parrish mentioned a successful OJT training opportunity that proved to be beneficial in the past. He suggested that the committee project piece should be incorporated in the developer's package when they request a redevelopment grant from the Newark Municipal Council. Dr. Joyce Wilson Harley expressed that the NEDC is eager to make the project piece a part of their package for businesses who seek redevelopment opportunities in Newark.

Apryl Caldwell suggested that we invite Talent Network to join us as allies. She shared that they do what we, as a committee strive to do, but they operate throughout the state. They have relationships with employers and training entities. The organization has identified key industries for employment opportunities and has successfully facilitated symposiums. She suggested that might we might be able to model their blueprint.

Mr. Rosen spoke of social impact bonds, an emerging funding source used in the public sector in which a commitment is made to pay for improved social outcomes that result in public sector savings. He cited an example from JP Morgan in Jersey City and expressed that they used the model to impact employment and training and encouraged us to take advantage of how we can do the same thing in Newark. He suggested that if we are looking for ways to distinguish ourselves from the pack, it is worth exploration.

Mr. Cahn stated that, although, the concept of soft skills can't be solved by the committee, there are agencies that offer training in soft skills. Committee members formulated a list of skills that fall under the umbrella of soft skills; they include, but are not limited to: speech, punctuality, professional attire, customer service, problem solving, conflict resolution, self-esteem, attendance and written communication. Mitra added that training agencies often reinforce soft skills through the curriculum. Apryl suggested that, as a committee, we can develop an accredited soft skill training certification that can prove to be beneficial to our workforce and attractive to businesses.

Next Steps

- Certification Process
- Placement & Procedure
- Transportation

Mr. Cahn thanked everyone for their participation and called a motion for adjournment. Motion was seconded.

Meeting adjourned. Next meeting is scheduled as follows:

Thursday, August 6, 2015
Essex County College
(Multi-Purpose Room, 4th Floor)
9:00 a.m. to 11 a.m.