



Richland County Council
Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee Meeting
MINUTES
March 12, 2024 – 2:00 PM
Council Chambers
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Jessica Mackey, Chair, Paul Livingston, and Chakisse Newton (via Zoom)

OTHERS PRESENT: Allison Terracio, Jason Branham, Anette Kirylo, Patrick Wright, Tamar Black, Ashiya Myers, Angela Weathersby, Kyle Holsclaw, Michelle Onley, Lori Thomas, Susan O’Cain, Dale Welch, Maddison Wilkerson, Jackie Hancock, Jeff Ruble, Jennifer Wladischkin, Carrie Turner, Stacey Hamm, Chelsea Bennett, Thomas Gilbert, and Michael Byrd

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairwoman Jessica Mackey called the meeting to order at approximately 2:00 PM.

Ms. Mackey noted that Ms. Newton had notified her that she would participate virtually, per Council Rules.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. February 27, 2024 – Mr. Livingston moved to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by Ms. Mackey.

In Favor: Livingston, Mackey, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** – Mr. Livingston moved to adopt the agenda as published, seconded by Ms. Newton.

In Favor: Livingston, Mackey, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

4. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/ACTION**

- a. Envisio Update – Ms. Mackey noted that Envisio is part of what is referred to as our “Dashboard.”

Ms. Maddison Wilkerson, Budget Director, announced the public dashboard will launch on April 16, 2024. They will be working to ensure the historical data in the dashboard is up-to-date. In addition, they will enhance the narratives, ensure all kinks are worked out before we go live, and work with Communications and Information Technology to guarantee the link is on the website. Communications will be pushing it out on social media.

Ms. Mackey inquired if there is a set schedule for when the dashboard will be updated.

Ms. Wilkerson responded it would depend on the metric. Most of the updates will be annual and coordinate with our fiscal year. Reminders will be sent out to staff members based on their due dates.

Ms. Mackey inquired if there would be a way for the public to tell when a goal has been updated.

Ms. Wilkerson replied that she was unsure but could inquire and get back to her.

Ms. Mackey requested Ms. Wilkerson to alert Council before the go-live date.

- b. Website Update – Ms. Jennifer Wladischkin, Procurement Director, indicated the request for proposals (RFP) is scheduled to close on April 4, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. The evaluation will be completed within two (2) weeks of the closing date. They hope to be able to make a recommendation at the May committee meetings.

Mr. Livingston inquired as to who makes up the evaluation team.

Ms. Wladischkin responded that the committee is typically made up of county employees, but sometimes we have outside participants. Those recommendations are provided to the County Administrator, who has the final authority to establish a committee. The names of the committee members are kept confidential.

Ms. Terracio expressed that she is delighted the website is moving forward.

- c. Public Private Partnership – Ms. Mackey stated this is a continuation of the last committee meeting where Mr. Ray Jones gave an overview. The committee requested the overview be provided in written form for their review.

Mr. Jones stated the committee and Council have spent a lot of time talking about the granular elements of the P3. Council had discussions about the capabilities of a P3 at the Council Retreat in Spartanburg. The direction received was to step back and talk about what a P3 might be able to do for the county and focus first on its functionality instead of all the details of its composition. To follow up on the last meeting, we came up with some ideas from research of other economic development organizations with a similar makeup and formation. Some of which are in South Carolina. He noted the P3 structure has become popular all over the country, particularly in the Southeast. The menu concept was introduced at the last meeting to give the committee a sense of what is happening. P3 organizations often provide similar-type functions called “staple menu items.” Some also have “specialty menu items” designed to address a need in a particular community. The hope is that we will start to think about what the “specialty items” for the Richland County P3 might look like.

Staple Menu Items:

- Prospect recruitment
- Workforce development
- Existing industry outreach
- Targeted industry sectors
- Product development
- Marketing
- Advertising and highlighting county/region lifestyle and opportunities

Ms. Newton inquired if more targeted recruitment is currently on the “menu?”, (i.e., grocery stores). If not, is it appropriate to be included on the list?

Mr. Jones indicated you will not see that kind of targeted activity right now; however, every P3 needs to meet the community’s needs. If Council decided they need more active recruitment of lifestyle-type businesses that are supportive of citizens having services they need, it could be a menu item unique to Richland County.

Ms. Newton expressed that she would like for us to consider making that a part of the menu. In addition, to acknowledge we have an Office of Small Business Opportunity.

Mr. Jones pointed out that when a business looks at a community, they take into account the community factors. Those are not insignificant to the way economic development plays out.

Ms. Newton stated that when it comes to workforce development she wants us to be clear about where we are being supportive, being additive, and being redundant. She wants us to direct the bulk of our efforts where we get the maximum impact.

Ms. Mackey noted this is an ever-evolving approach. We can start with these few things and move forward from there. She agrees that there are a lot of organizations that do workforce development, but she wonders if there are areas that are missed that our P3 can help serve. She believes we could serve in an advisory role to these organizations to provide our input on where we feel they may need to go.

Ms. Newton expressed that the state has a huge incentive structure and economic development infrastructure aimed at manufacturing. What that means, though, is that there are certain types of knowledge workers and jobs that get left out in the cold. It would be great to look at the overall gaps in the types of industries we are recruiting and the incentives and opportunities.

Mr. Jones stated that one of the things the strategic planning study calls for is a mechanism to have a dialogue with the private sector. The idea that Richland County could be a place that does a good job of dialoguing with the businesses here now would put us on the cutting edge of meeting their needs. They know what is missing. They know the skills gaps and can identify them early. The opportunity to be a listener, spot needs, and be a leader is something that could be unique to this P3.

Specialty Menu Items:

Mr. Jones indicated these items are things the “group” is undertaking because a specific need is identified in the community.

- Advocacy Efforts
 - Florence Progress hosts a Florence County Day at the State House to “raise awareness about Florence County among our state legislators
 - The Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation promotes affordable housing within their region
- Community Engagement
 - Lots of creative ways for P3s to engage with the business community and other community leaders
- Ambassadorship
 - Wake County has “Digital Ambassadors” that recruit people to effectively post on their social media networks positive stories about economic outcomes in the county
- Transportation
 - Communities have come up with creative ways to get individuals to work (i.e., Spartanburg and Anderson counties)
- Childcare
 - This is going to be more prevalent in the future; the county could be more creative on childcare to fill the gaps
- Targeted Events
 - Host receptions for investors highlighting the successes of existing local businesses

Mr. Jones noted economic development is a complex business. There are people whose jobs are to do nothing more than help the likes of Scout find the likes of Richland County. They utilized a consulting firm based in Chicago and Miami with offices worldwide. Those individuals can be marketed to, shown our community, and introduced to the existing industries. One Spartanburg hosts several types of events that are not just targeted at large plant directors and executives but are targeted toward smaller businesses.

Ms. Newton inquired if there is a source of input we should consider as we put these things together—for example, best practices in other areas.

Mr. Jones responded that one of the best sources of information is our own economic development professionals in Richland County. They have done a good job of identifying what they perceive as gaps. There is a state-level economic development organization and the Department of Commerce who have put out reports. This menu will never be static. Our organization will have to be dynamic and react to what is happening, which will have to be a charge from Council to the P3.

Ms. Mackey stated that when she thinks about the P3, she looks at our “staple menu” items as basic things we should do. Then, when we look at the “specialty menu” items, two (2) important things for her are transportation and childcare. We have been one of the leaders in the state in offering a childcare incentive to Scout, ultimately helping us recruit them. How do we continue that with other employers? The transportation piece is sometimes a barrier to individuals getting jobs.

Mr. Branham noted he is in favor of us working to connect people to a galvanized sector in a positive way. He indicated he is always concerned about expending public funds for a new initiative. He favors supporting the recruitment of jobs and seeing people qualify for jobs that will allow them to better cover their household needs. He would be hesitant to commit taxpayer money down to an individual level when it comes to individual households or their transportation and childcare needs.

Mr. Livingston moved to forward the document provided by Mr. Jones to Council for feedback and to prioritize transportation, childcare, and community engagement, seconded by Ms. Mackey.

Ms. Newton inquired what would happen after that.

Ms. Mackey replied the document could be provided to Council for feedback, but it would need to stay in committee to continue development of the process. The motion solidifies that we, as a committee, are ready for feedback.

Ms. Newton indicated she would like to see us evaluate opportunities to recruit and welcome some of the quality-of-life businesses into communities.

Mr. Livingston agreed to include Ms. Newton’s request to evaluate the recruitment of quality-of-life businesses into the community.

In Favor: Livingston, Mackey, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

Mr. Jones stated the next area we need to address is how the P3 should be organized, specifically how we want the board to function.

5. **ADJOURNMENT** – Mr. Livingston moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Newton.

In Favor: Livingston, Mackey, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:54 PM.