

Minutes
Advisory Committee on International Trade
Virginia Economic Development Partnership
February 5, 2024

9th Floor, Board Room
901 E. Cary Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. by Mike Ligon, Chairman of the VEDP Advisory Committee on International Trade.

Members Present:

Hobey Bauhan
Michael Coleman
Bob Feeser
Anne Marie Lacourse
Mike Ligon, Chair
Will Sessoms
David White
James Xu

Members Absent:

Tag Greason
Secretary Lohr

Staff Present:

Stephanie Agee
Lindsey Bertozzi
Jamie Canup
Jason El Koubi
Julie Richmond
Nicole Riley
Mary Wood

Guests Present:

U.S. Representative Abigail Spanberger
Congressional Staffer Assistant Director, Kristi Black
Wyatt Toehlke, Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Trade

Welcome and Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Mike Ligon welcomed everyone to the meeting at 10:10 a.m., including U.S. Representative Abigail Spanberger, extending his thanks to her for joining the meeting. The Committee members each introduced themselves.

Public Comments

Chairman Ligon solicited for public comments. There were none.

Review and Approval of November 27, 2023 Meeting Minutes

After a review of the minutes, Chairman Ligon asked for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion was made by Hobey Bauhan. The motion was seconded by Bob Feeser and was unanimously approved by all Committee members present.

Closed Session

Chairman Ligon requested that the Committee move into a closed meeting at 10:17 a.m. A motion was made by David White and seconded by Bob Feeser. Jamie Canup, Assistant General Counsel, voiced the following motion for adoption by the Committee to enter into a closed meeting. The following motion was unanimously adopted by all Committee members present.

I MOVE THAT THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE OF THE VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP AUTHORITY CONVENE A CLOSED MEETING TO DISCUSS SPECIFIC STRATEGIES PURSUANT TO SUBDIVISION A 50 OF §2.2-3711 OF THE CODE OF VIRGINIA, WHICH ALLOWS FOR THE DISCUSSION OF ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN THAT WOULD REVEAL TO COMMONWEALTH'S COMPETITORS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THE STRATEGIES INTENDED TO BE DEPLOYED BY THE COMMONWEALTH.

Upon the return to the open meeting, the Committee members considered the following certification:

DO YOU CERTIFY, THAT TO THE BEST OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE, (i) ONLY PUBLIC BUSINESS MATTERS LAWFULLY EXEMPTED FROM THE OPEN MEETING REQUIREMENTS OF FOIA WERE DISCUSSED IN THE CLOSED MEETING, AND (ii) ONLY SUCH MATTERS AS WERE IDENTIFIED IN THE MOTION TO GO INTO THE CLOSED MEETING WERE HEARD, DISCUSSED, OR CONSIDERED DURING THE CLOSED MEETING?

The Committee approved the foregoing certification by roll call vote, bringing the Committee out of the closed meeting at 11:34 a.m.

Yeas: Mike Ligon, Hobey Bauhan, Bob Feeser, Anne Marie Lacourse, Will Sessoms, David White, James Xu

Nays: None

General Assembly Update

Nicole Riley, VEDP's Senior Vice President of Policy and Strategic Partnership, provided an update on the status of the General Assembly's ongoing session to date. She said that VEDP was pleased with the introduced budget from the Governor and thankful for the inclusion of \$150M for site readiness and additional proposed funding for recruiting and retaining talent in Virginia.

Jason El Koubi remarked that Virginia was well-positioned compared to other states in the post-COVID period. He commented that VEDP has undertaken an extensive research project indicating that the activity we could invest in with the highest expected return would be improving the rate of retention of employees in Virginia. He said new funding would be needed for additional research and development of programs and activities focused on retaining talent in Virginia and attracting new workers to the state.

Will Sessoms suggested the importance of taking action soon versus doing additional research and also mentioned the importance of investing in retaining and retraining veterans so that they will stay in Virginia upon exiting military service.

Ann Marie Lacourse mentioned she had recently visited Michigan where there are 4,600 unemployed welders. She suggested the maritime industry's need for that type of skilled workforce. She mentioned that the mid-west is currently filled with highly skilled yet unemployed people that could be recruited to Virginia.

Chairman's Update

Chairman Ligon commented that the conversation with Representative Spanberger was positive and appreciated the Committee's input in advance of and during the meeting. He appreciated the committee members' questions relating to Virginia's strong defense sector, manufacturing and logistics, supply chains, tariffs, infrastructure improvements, where VEDP should focus its efforts, and the overall future of US-China relations and how all impact international trade in Virginia.

In closing, the Chairman asked all to reference Senator Kaine's recent challenge to the committee to work on a campaign to do a better job of telling the trade story. Chairman Ligon also thanked Jason El Koubi for his participation in the meeting.

Ann Marie Lacourse asked to whom the talking points of the campaign should be directed.

Stephanie Agee suggested looking at what the public perception of trade is and how to engage people to be comfortable talking about why trade matters. She said, "messaging is key."

Wyatt Toehlke, Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Trade, recognized Representative Spanberger's voice in Washington, D.C. and agreed with the Committee that the meeting went well.

Stephanie Agee solicited for alternative dates for the upcoming April ACIT meeting as she has a conflict.

Virginia's Export/Import Data

Stephanie Agee provided a summary of Virginia's recent export and import data. She commented that exports were down 11% from the same period last year, noting the impact of the "fuel" category on overall export figures, which includes coal exports and reflects the fluctuating price of coal. Ms. Agee also noted that imports into Virginia were down 15%.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:04 p.m.