

Fairfax County Economic Advisory Commission
Meeting Summary
March 21, 2017, 8:00AM

Those commission members attending the meeting included: Chairman John Foust, Chairman Sharon Bulova, Supervisor John Cook, Supervisor Penny Gross, Supervisor Pat Herrity, Supervisor Cathy Hudgins, Supervisor Kathy Smith, Supervisor Dan Storck, Anthony Chang, Angelica Delboy, Gerald Gordon, Dana Kauffman, Stephen Keat, Edythe Frankel Kelleher, Edward Long, Frank McDermott, William Rucker, James Quigley, Siddique Sheikh, Mark Silverwood, Tom Weithman

Chairman Foust opened the meeting. He moved approval of the prior meetings' minutes, which was approved unanimously.

Chairman Foust discussed the challenges that federal sequestration brought to the local economy, including a higher office vacancy rate and decreased federal procurement rate. The Strategic Plan was designed to help address these concerns.

Curt Hoffman, Senior Director for Real Estate from the Economic Development Authority, presented information on the County's office market. There is strong leasing activity, and vacancy rates, while not expected to have dramatic changes, are heading in the right direction. There is a flight to quality office space.

Supervisor John Cook discussed the efforts of the Building Repositioning Workgroup, an effort to address empty office buildings and how to make them more competitive, including where applicable, changing the use of certain buildings such as converting office to residential use. They are looking at emerging trends including co-working, co-living, e-lofts, makerspaces, food incubators and urban farming. Supervisor Cook said that it was important for the County to be flexible in zoning, proffers, and comprehensive planning.

Chuck Bean and Bob Sweeney from the Council of Governments, talked about the Global Cities initiative to help promote Metro area export plans. A Brookings Institute study showed that roughly 3,200 companies in the region were under-exporting. The region is currently 93rd in the top 100 metro areas in exporting. The existing assistance programs are fragmented and hindering future growth. They suggested focusing on mid-size companies and creating an exporters council, an export systems database, and a world trade center. Members discussed international trade and convention business and regional economic growth.

Ryan Rers, Program Director for Halcyon Incubators, presented information on their efforts at creating incentives for startups. They support social enterprises - largely in the areas of health, food, and child care - connect mentors, investors, and entrepreneurs in businesses furthering intentional social impact. They hope to establish the region as a hub for social enterprise and provide a competitive advantage. Members discussed how to draw existing capital and connect it to the entrepreneurs.

There was no further business.

Chairman Foust adjourned the meeting.