

Economic Development Strategic Planning Workshop

October 28, 2021

Background: At the August 17, 2021 EDAB meeting, it was noted that staff was working with Economic Development Director Chris Edwards to coordinate an Economic Development Strategic Plan Workshop for October that would provide an opportunity for staff and a third-party workshop facilitator to engage with elected officials, Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) members, business owners, and other New Smyrna Beach stakeholders to discuss current economic development strategic planning efforts. Focus was on Southeast Volusia Manufacturing and Technology Coalition, Inc. Phase 2 Marketing Plans, Southeast Volusia Regional Economic Development Strategy, Economic Resilience, Western Growth Planning, and Airport Development.

The workshop was attended by Mayor Owen, Commission Hartman, City Manager Khalid Resheidat, City staff, EDAB members, and other interested parties. It was facilitated by Michael Zaharios, of Zaharios Enterprises LLC. Presenters included NSB Director of CRA and Economic Development, Chris Edwards; NSB Visitor's Bureau President, Debbie Meihls; and Acting Economic Development Director of Volusia County, Brad Harris.

Kevin Kyle, chair of the Economic Development Advisory Board, welcomed everyone to the workshop and gave the highlights of his lifelong surfing around the world and his current job as head of Germfree Labs in Ormond Beach. It employs 180 people and is a privately owned S- Corp. They developed the biocontainment lab that was used to discover COVID in China, illustrating that if Germfree can establish a going concern in this region, so can others, especially regarding sources needed for the supply chain for the growing space industry in Titusville and Cape Canaveral.

Chris Edwards gave an [overview of the City, its resources, and unique potential](#).

Debbie Meihls discussed what the [NSB Visitors' Bureau](#) does to promote tourism and particularly tourism from the United Kingdom. A few years ago, NSB joined the international Blue Community Consortium, which was developed as a way for coastal communities to share ideas on sustainable ocean issues that are of concern. We were one of two cities to do this and partnered with the UK, hence the push for tourism between our two countries). She shared that their small staff and budget limitations make meeting their strategic goals a challenge.

Brad Harris provided an overview and some statistics [of the County's recent small business initiative survey](#) that was part of the [Volusia Small Business Initiative](#) that kicked off on June 2nd.

Both Ms. Meihls and Mr. Harris stressed the need to think/plan/act locally and regionally as Oak Hill, Edgewater and NSB grow.

The workshop facilitator, Michael Zaharios, using the interactive mobile device polling program Menti, had questions for all the attendees to answer regarding the analysis and top priorities of our existing Economic Development Strategic Plan, stressing the top priorities' area that needed feedback. The next step will be for the raw data collected by this program, which reflects honest input and new ideas, to be compiled into a report, so the City can pursue the next steps needed with the EDAB and the City Commission. Mr. Edwards plans to have this done by the end of the year.

Note: Mr. Edwards will be giving a brief outline of the workshop at the November 15th Neighborhood Council meeting