

Wednesday December 13, 2023

3:00-4:00pm

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Lynda Hefner, Chair

Kelly Koermer

Mina Izadjoo

Sue Chambers

Luke Chow

Sam Griffith

Greg Maxwell

Bobby Patton

Clark Machine

Carroll Community College

Integrated PharmaServices

Strouse

Prime Manufacturing Technologies, Inc

National Jet

Northrop Grumman

Patton Electronics

Commerce Staff:

Heather Gramm, Assistant Secretary BISD

I. Call to Order & Chairman Remarks

At 3:00pm Chair Lynda Hefner called the meeting to order.

II. Approval of the November 2023 minutes

Board members were provided the draft minutes from the November 2, 2023 meeting both via email. Lynda asked the Board to review the minutes, then requested a motion to approve. Lynda Hefner made a motion to approve, Bobby Patton 2nd the motion, and with no discussion the minutes were approved unanimously.

III. Discussion on MMAB Recommendations to Secretary of Commerce

The Board dedicated the full meeting to discussion of top priorities for Maryland Manufacturers and potential recommendations to be made to the Secretary of Commerce. The discussion began with agreement that 2 top priorities were workforce and increased funding for the Manufacturing 4.0 grant program.

In review of the Transforming Manufacturing Workgroup report, there was discussion around the recommendation to create a Maryland Manufacturing Innovation Center. Topics discussed included the scope, scale and cost of the proposed center, and whether that was the best and most effective use of funds to support the needs of manufacturers; the diversity of manufacturing in the state across various subsectors could make it difficult to create a single center that met the needs of all types of manufacturers; and that such a center would still

leave many needs of the industry unaddressed. Lacking consensus, the Board determined that this would not be included as one of the MMAB recommendations.

The Board then discussed several core areas and key issues in which the state should focus and improve to most effectively grow and support the manufacturing sector:

- Having a pro-growth, pro-business strategy
- Analyzing and addressing Maryland's business competitiveness factors
 - Workforce
 - Regulatory environment
 - Cost of doing business – energy a key factor for this industry
 - Supporting new technology development to become more effective/efficient
- Evaluating incentive programs to ensure these programs are effective and enabling reinvestment in the state's manufacturing businesses
- Federal R&D Tax Credit – changes at the federal level related to accelerated depreciation have significantly reduced the value of this tax credit.

On the topic of workforce, it was stated that an untapped source of workforce is immigration. Many immigrants think of agricultural and construction jobs when seeking employment, but are not aware of the opportunities in manufacturing. It appears that the immigration/refugee services are very disjointed, with too many service organizations that are not coordinated, and tend to not focus on job placement and career pathways. The group asked Commerce to research anything that may exist currently in Maryland to coordinate job placement for immigrants/refugees. There was also discussion about whether this population of workers would be enough to make an impact on the worker shortage, and what role the state should or should not play in providing these services to this population.

Education and training was also discussed as part of the workforce conversation. Members of the Board observed that one challenge is the focus within the K-12 system on college preparation rather than skills training. It was acknowledged that the Blueprint is a starting point to address that, but the current 3.0 GPA requirement for CTC programs is a barrier, and that overall the Blueprint is a long-term solution but does not address the immediate workforce needs.

In general, companies have no problem finding engineers and other degree-level employees. The gap is in the skills/technician areas where certifications or even very basic training is required. Other issues facing workforce attraction for manufacturers are how to make the jobs attractive to kids coming out of high school, and how to overcome the high desire for remote work.

It was also noted that the apprenticeship model is a good one, however the process to establish an apprenticeship program needs to be simplified, and additional staffing is needed within the Department of Labor to more quickly process apprenticeship paperwork. It is currently very difficult for smaller employers to implement an apprenticeship program.

As a next step, Commerce staff would take these discussion points and begin to draft an outline of priority topics and potential recommendations for the Board to review and discuss at their next meeting.

IV. Adjournment of MMAB Business Meeting

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m. by the Chair.