

Small Business Council Meeting Minutes
August 18, 2016

Committee members present: Carla Schuessler, Stephanie Bohardt, Lee Zulanch, Jeffrey Wisniewski, Josh Williams, Jamie Saunders.

Committee members not present: Julie Kopnick, Peter Gasca, Elizabeth Howland, Steve Kahn, O'Neil McCoy, Sarah Morrow, Wendy Parkman, Bernita Platt, Wes Standish.

Staff present: Cindy Gettig, Amanda Blomquist.

Others present: Garry James, Jason Greene, Megan Nowacoski.

The meeting was called to order at 3:33 p.m.

I. Welcome & Introductions

II. Office of Small and Minority Business Contracting and Certification

Garry James told the council about his state office which certifies small and minority businesses. He's focusing on regional trainings right now to "take the mystery out of doing business with the state of South Carolina."

Certification does not guarantee grants will be awarded. To be certified, businesses must be in business for a minimum of one year, 51 percent ownership must have management responsibilities, personal total net worth cannot exceed \$750,000, must have an office in South Carolina. If denied for any reason, the employer can reapply one year later. If approved, certification is valid for 5 years.

State Procurement Contracts are required to spend 10 percent of their annual budget to MBE or WBE businesses. Firms that subcontract a portion of work to certified minority firms are eligible for an income tax credit.

The SMBCC has a memorandum of understanding with the SCDOT disadvantaged business entity program. If you have the DBE certification, you don't need the SMBCC certification.

Benefits of the certification include networking, solicitations, an annual trade fair, a quarterly newsletter and regional workshops/seminars. For more information and the application, council was directed to the website, www.smbcc.sc.gov/smbcc.

III. Grand Strand Tech Council Project

Jason Greene and Meagan Nowacoski of Grand Strand Technology Council told the council about a new website project they are working on.

Greene said the last 15 months have been spent redefining the council. Their mission is to promote the Grand Strand as a place for technology sector growth, support local businesses and enhance education.

Greene said the computer science, manufacturing, aerospace and automotive are among the top sectors.

The Grand Strand Tech Council owns whynotthebeach.com which is a site designed to sell the live and work piece to tech companies going into business or relocating the business. The site is undergoing a renovation with a relaunch expected early in

2017. It will include maps of the business districts and services offered like fiber or natural gas, stories of people who have relocated and grown businesses on the Grand Strand, and links to additional resources.

Nowacoski asked the council for input on the site.

Jamie Saunders asked about the site promotion. Nowacoski said there will be an outside marketing plan in place following the launch.

IV. Small Business Saturday

Kori Hippe told the council to mark their calendars for Small Business Saturday – Nov. 26. She encouraged members to shop small, shop local, shop our members.

V. Small Business Members Membership Survey Results

Cindy Gettig went through the survey results with the council.

Josh Williams asked if we knew the percentage of participation. Amanda Blomquist said we had 599 responses, but we don't have a percent of chamber members. She noted some people filled it out more than once and there were some instances of multiple people from the same business filling out the survey.

VI. Follow-up to Survey Results

Gettig went through the division's action list created from the survey results.

One idea is to do a business to business bus tour to different areas focusing on member services and highlighting members.

Staffing and workforce issues – we've brought in experts from across the state and have resources on our site, but will be looking to do more next year.

Business referral reports best practices – how we best communicate and share our referral reports with our members.

Saunders said she didn't know these existed. Bohardt asked what's on the referral report.

Blomquist said all link clicks, referrals from our front desk, ambassadors, etc.

Blomquist said there was an idea from the membership committee, to give the links to referral reports to our ambassadors who can then share it with the members. Council members agreed that sounded like it would be helpful.

Chamber Access – potentially tying a new member orientation to a business-after-hours event.

Nonprofit Expo – we've done this in the past and are bringing it back.

ThinkMyrtleBeach.com – this site is a real estate and relocation site. The original idea was that this site could have ads on it and the realtors will love it. Gettig said it didn't ever get that kind of traction for advertising, so it will become just a relocation site.

Member appreciation – we recently learned about another chamber doing a big BBQ lunch for their members. We're going to do this next year probably in April right before renewals go out.

Annual Meeting will be kept in the evening. We found a lot of employees couldn't get away for the day time event. So we changed it to an evening event and it was very successful.

Gettig said the date is already set at April 18, 2017.

Chamber Academy – in 2015 had 63 classes for the year and this year we will probably blow

that number out of the water. We'll be looking to find qualified speakers and new topics and may be adding webinars too.

Gettig asked the council to look over the survey results and send suggestions they might have.

The meeting adjourned at 4:53 p.m.