



## **Board of Directors Meeting**

### **MINUTES**

**March 27, 2025, 8:00 a.m.**

### **Hybrid Zoom/In-Person Meeting**

**REDI Office, 51 Monroe Street, PE20, Rockville, MD**

**Board Attendees Virtual:** LaVonne Torrence Berner, Nikhil Bijlani, Kelly Groff, Bei Ma, Dan Mallon, Suzanne Osborn, CJ Overly, Susan Price, Cliff Viers, Justin Yang, Jeff Mihelich (Liaison)

**Board Attendees In-Person:** Nancy Regelin, Monique Ashton (Liaison)

**Absent Board Members:** Richard Alvarez, Nick Fullenkamp, Marji Graf, Muhammad Kehnemouyi, Carla Merritt, Todd Pearson, Morgan Sullivan, Bill Tompkins

**Other In-Person Attendees:** Staff: Cindy Rivarde, Richelle Wilson, Priscilla Der, Yesenia Cruz, Mark Pierzchala (Former Council Member), Mike Drucker (Presenter -Maryland Energy Innovation Accelerator), and Sean Eagan (RegenxBio)

**Other Virtual Attendees:** Staff: Amanda Bosland, Rhonda Devan (Devan Consulting), Barry Jackson (Councilmember), Ben Margolis (Presenter -Maryland Energy Innovation Accelerator)

### **Meeting Called to Order by: Nancy Regelin**

1. Call to Order, Welcome and Remarks ..... Nancy Regelin  
**Nancy Regelin called the meeting to order at 8:02 am**

2. Operational Items
  - a. **Action: Approval of Minutes (February)**..... Nancy Regelin

**ACTION: Dan Mallon motioned to approve the February minutes, seconded by Bei Ma. The motion passed unanimously.**

- b. Treasurer's Report ..... Rhonda Devan
    - i. **Review of Financials (through February)**

Ms. Devan stated that REDI has \$1.8 million in total cash funds, with \$841k unrestricted and just under \$300k in reserved funds. The average monthly expenses are \$168k, providing nine months of coverage with unrestricted funds and restricted funds. About 11 months covered with all funds including reserve. The expense ratios are consistent with the two previous years with

16% of overhead and 84% program. Eighty percent of the budgeted revenue has been received. Total assets are at \$2.6 million compared to \$2.5 million at this time last year.

- ii. Request to sole source training contractor 37 Oaks...Karen Sippel/Richelle Wilson

REDI previously hired 37 Oaks to provide an initial small-scale manufacturing cohort for Fall of 2024 at a cost of \$12,100 as well as a visual marketing session for MWBC. Staff would like to hire 37 Oaks to conduct another small-scale manufacturing technical training program at a cost of \$21,000 and to deliver curriculum to Shop Local participants in Bowie and Savage Mill for \$33,000.

REDI's financial policies and procedures state that any purchase over \$25,000 requires a Request for Proposal (RFP). Staff research indicates that 37 Oaks offers a unique combination of services and skill set not provided by any other potential company in this space, and therefore, they request to sole source this additional work rather than pursuing an RFP process.

It was also noted that the SBA procurement rules provide that for items between \$10,000 and \$250,000 an organization should follow its organizational procurement policies and procedures. The Finance Committee reviewed the request and felt that the full Board should vote to make it clear that REDI is following its policies and procedures in case the SBA inquires.

The three-month small-scale manufacturing program will be for businesses that have been in operation for five years or more, focused on providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of how to scale businesses by entering wholesale and e-commerce markets. The program is intended to help participants diversify their revenue streams and strengthen their long-term sustainability through multi-channel sales strategies.

The retail curriculum will be an 8-month retail-specific training program for business owners, including live instruction, 1:1 coaching, applied learning, and collaborative opportunities.

Ms. Wilson shared that metrics are being created to measure the success of previous and current cohorts. One measure is whether businesses are able to occupy space in Rockville. Ms. Wilson meets with every individual in the cohort to continue MWBC connections.

**Action: Authorization to hire 37 Oaks as a training contractor for shop local and small-scale manufacturing**

**ACTION: Susan Price moved to hire 37 Oaks as a sole source contractor; Suzanne Osborn seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.**

### 3. Presentations

Maryland Energy Innovation Accelerator (MEIA).....Mike Ducker/Ben Margolis

Mr. Ducker stated that the Maryland Energy Innovation Accelerator (MEIA) is a part of the Maryland Clean Energy Center focused on supporting early-stage climate/clean tech businesses. MEIA is here to promote clean tech innovation. There is tremendous economic opportunity in clean tech with high-paying jobs, potential for manufacturing and diverse real estate usage. Clean tech includes diverse and unique technologies – clean energy, agriculture, IT, building management, carbon markets, and batteries. However, with the administration change, it is less about clean tech and climate tech but more about energy domination. For instance, there are issues with the grid as we electrify more, so there is a massive increase in investment going into this market space.

MEIA mentioned that Maryland is known as a location for innovation and technology development. According to the National Science Foundation, Maryland ranks #2 in Federal R&D obligations and #5 in R&D expenditures at colleges and universities. Specifically, the University of Maryland received the second highest number of ARPA-E awards in the country. In addition, Hopkins has a strong materials engineering program.

MEIA helps to move ideas out of the lab to be commercialized by taking an ecosystem-based approach to supporting companies. A key support is to match investors and scientists with business executives. The program focuses on providing strategic partnerships and mentorship to the businesses in the accelerator. MEIA matches start-ups with professional services and program management to increase their marketability and potential of bringing a product to market. MEIA has identified the four valleys of death in climate technology commercialization, with investment over time and the funding gaps that startups must overcome to scale.

MEIA has helped 116 companies, created 225 rewarding careers, and attracted an astounding \$190 million in combined grants and private investments. One success story MEIA shared was Inventwood. InventWood created its technology at the University of Maryland, replacing steel and metal with wood. The company recently set up a 90,000 square foot facility in Frederick and was able to get commercial clients and \$20 million in funding. It is currently in the process of building its manufacturing facility.

Next Glass, a Rockville-based company, created technology in which glass could insulate a structure. Pirl, based in Rockville, manufactures EV chargers for all electric vehicles, creating accessibility within the industry.

The competitive advantage Rockville could focus on is promoting its affordable real estate, as this is a big issue for companies needing affordable space. Promoting metro accessibility and proximity to Washington, DC, is also a drawing factor for companies. Livability is a major factor since Rockville is a nice place to live and raise a family. It was also noted that Rockville seems to be attracting companies that are developing sustainable building materials, which may be a market differentiator to highlight. Of course, Rockville and Maryland are known for their strong and available talented workforce, which contributes to advancing this industry. MEIA is cultivating an energy focused Executive in Residents program to support emerging companies.

MEIA suggested working with REDI to conduct a round table discussion and survey follow-up so the startups could give clear feedback on what they are looking for and how Rockville can meet those needs.

4. CEO Report..... Cindy Rivarde/Richelle Wilson  
..... Karen Sippel/Amanda Bosland

a. Economic Development

i. Business Retention, Expansion, Attraction/Placemaking

1. Life Science Branding Project

Ms. Rivarde shared the logo for Bio has been selected and the micro site is moving along. REDI has been working with Thermofisher/PPD for the CEO dinner on May 8<sup>th</sup>. This will help to bring about community connection experience that is missing here and to cultivate a sense of belonging for the bio companies here.

2. Business Visits/Openings

Ms. Wilson shared that the second small-scale manufacturing cohort is in the works, focused on businesses that have been around for a minimum of 3-5 years. REDI also has a table at the Moco Food and Beverage showcase, which is held on Sunday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, and Monday, March 31<sup>st</sup>. REDI continues to work on the task force with WorkSource, MCDC, and other partners. On the business development side, REDI is working with some businesses and government contracting businesses impacted by the recent federal restructuring.

On the business retention front, Ms. Wilson shares highlights have been in the aerospace industry. She met with PTX a spin off X-Energy. We've met with them along with MCDC to help with their needs, including hiring and connecting them to WorkSource, Montgomery College, and the Universities at Shady Grove. REDI will meet with Quantum Space, another spin-off of X-Energy, looking for manufacturing space. PTX works on repairing systems on the ground while Quantum Space works on fixing satellites in space.

3. Board Retreat Updates

Ms. Rivarde shared REDI is in the process of finalizing the agenda. Stephen Rice, the Deputy Secretary of Commerce, will be the speaker. The state issued its strategic plan, and Mr. Rice will review those details at the retreat.

ii. Marketing

Ms. Bosland shared that the Moco Eats Food and Beverage showcase is an event to generate leads for Global Bites Restaurant week, which will be planned in June. REDI and Visit Montgomery are creating a Twinbrook District page featuring an area overview and highlights of the community's restaurants and retail businesses. REDI will meet with the Twinbrook Community Association on April 15<sup>th</sup> to discuss the project and review content for the Twinbrook District page. REDI met with the owners of Kanpai BBQ Hotpot Buffet, Kajiken Ramen, Okaeri Japanese Cafe, Meow Claw, and the owners of The Shops at Congressional Village. REDI also met with Wegman's corporate team for their opening on June 25<sup>th</sup>. The approved Spanish and Chinese Business Guides translations are now live on the website. Wegman's will be opening on June 25<sup>th</sup>.

iii. Small Business Support/MWBC

1. Shop Local update

The 6-person Savage Mill cohort was finalized and launched in mid-March. Recruitment for the 12-person Bowie cohort has concluded. It is anticipated that vendor selection will be finalized by the end of March, learning sessions starting in mid-April, and opening the store early May.

REDI hired a professional firm to create a design plan for the 3,000 sq ft store in Bowie Town Center and is in the process of hiring a general contractor to manage cosmetic store renovations as well as service contractors needed throughout our lease term. With the support of LaVonne Torrence Berner, REDI secured an agreement from the landlord to install a non-illuminated exterior sign, at a cost savings of \$4,000.

2. Curriculum update – Shop local curriculum will be delivered by 37 Oaks while staff works on developing their own curriculum as required by the FY25 Montgomery County grant for MWBC.

5. Strategic Items

a. Incentive Committee..... LaVonne Torrence Berner  
No updates were made by Committee Members.

b. Marketing Committee ..... Bei Ma  
No updates were made by Committee Members.

c. MWBC Advisory Board..... Nancy Regelin  
The advisory board is getting together for its annual meeting in April.

d. Bio Committee..... Justin Yang  
Ms. Wilson shared the Bio Committee will be discussing the next Bio Boast event and organizing the agenda.

6. Brief Partner Updates:

a. Greater Rockville Chamber of Commerce..... Marji Graf  
The Annual Public Safety Awards is coming up on June 3<sup>rd</sup> at Lakewood. Also, Golf at Crossvines on July 14<sup>th</sup>.

b. City of Rockville..... Mayor Ashton/Jeff Mihelich  
Mayor Ashton shared that the city is in the middle of budget hearings and planning and had a work session on operating expenditures as well. The master plan has been approved for Rockville Town Center, along with the floating zone, enabling faster implementation of elements of the master plan. The city is also in the middle of a zoning ordinance rewrite, which is happening over the next few meetings. In addition, 43 action items on the housing initiative are the most comprehensive to date in order to expand access to affordable housing. The City of Rockville continues to collaborate with the county and state on the Federal WorkSource issue. Several job fairs have been happening, with one yesterday with WorkSource Montgomery, a veterans' fair on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, and on March 30<sup>th</sup>, Montgomery College is hosting a dedicated job fair for life sciences. Rockville is looking at additional funding to provide support for social services for people who may need additional support.

- c. Montgomery County EDC ..... Bill Tompkins  
Mr. Tompkins was not present.
- d. Visit Montgomery ..... Kelly Groff  
Ms. Groff shared some data from February 2025 compared with February 2024: Montgomery County's occupancy is down 6.7%, Rockville is down 13.7%, Fairfax is up 4.2%, PG is up 2.5%, and Arlington is up 6.5%. The business travel for our federal agencies in our county has been affected by the Federal changes. Bethesda North Conference Center has also taken a hit due to the loss of federal government meetings.

For the Moco Eats Food & Beverage Showcase, on March 30<sup>th</sup> tickets are sold out with about 600 people expected. The following Monday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, Cindy will be one of the moderators with 8 breakout sessions during the conference.

- e. Maryland Department of Commerce ..... Carla Merritt (on leave)

**ACTION: Dan Mallon motioned to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by LaVonne Torrence Berner. The motion was passed unanimously.  
The meeting adjourned at 9:16.**

#### **Upcoming Important Dates:**

**Executive Committee Meeting** ..... March 8, 4:30 p.m.

**Finance Committee Meeting** ..... March 8, 5:30 p.m.

**Board Retreat** ..... April 26, Shulman Rogers, 8 a.m.-noon (starting sharp, so get there a little earlier).

**Board Meeting** ..... May 22, 8:00 a.m.