



Business Roundtable Board Meeting Summary March 11, 2009

Thank you for everyone who attended our March board meeting. For those who could not, we had a very informative meeting. This is a quick rundown of what you missed.

Roundtable Board Chair **Tim Adams** opened the meeting with a heartfelt thanks to our public safety leaders in attendance (Police Chief **Roberto Hylton**, Fire Chief **Eugene Jones** and Corrections Director **Mary Lynn McDonough**).

Roundtable President and CEO **M.H. Jim Estopp** echoed those sentiments and spoke of the reason we were honoring them today, the recent news of a twenty percent reduction across the board in violent crime over the past three years.

Our first guest was the new Secretary of the Department of Business & Economic Development for the state of Maryland, **Christian Johansson**. Secretary Johansson mentioned that we were one of the first groups he had spoken to since taking over the post in January and thanked Mr. Estopp and Mr. Adams for assisting businesses to know of the opportunities at Andrews.

His four major priorities include:

- 1) Restoring the confidence of businesses in the state
- 2) Value of DBED as a voice for Maryland business
- 3) Getting more economic gains from what we already have
- 4) Serve as point of contact for stimulus funds for Maryland business

According to the secretary, Maryland has far outperformed the nation in terms of jobs in the health, education and government contracting sectors. All those major industries are gaining jobs. He wants people to know that the sky isn't falling and that employers should not cut back on staffing. He believes that DBED should tell that story to state businesses and produce the numbers that support that position. The nation has lost 4.4 million jobs since September 2007, but the state is faring much better.

He also wanted to address the perception that DBED hadn't been a strong enough voice for business in the state. To do that would require harnessing a collection of voices and putting processes in place to make those voices heard. Secretary Johansson also believes it is a priority of the state to re-establish the Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO). He also wanted to make it known that the state would be listening to the voices on our board for input and knowledge.

He believed that we should focus on our core industries, the biggest of which was the state's relationship with federal facilities. He feels that we've never harnessed that power fully. We should be protecting what we have and expanding and growing federal facilities in state.

He pointed out that Aberdeen Proving Ground was spending \$20 billion in procurement and that the state was looking proactively to harness assets like that one.

The world's largest consumer was next door to Maryland and we have to take advantage. Six new contingency offices were opening. With the stimulus plan providing \$5 billion for Health IT, we need to be out front in science and make opportunities known to our businesses.



State Secretary for Business and Economic Development Christian Johansson addresses the Roundtable Board of Directors while Roundtable President and CEO M.H. Jim Estep (Right) and FOP Lodge 89 First Vice-President Dean Jones (Rear) look on

Roger Blunt had the first question for Secretary Johansson, asking about construction. He said that too many smaller businesses were undercapitalized and unable to secure the necessary credit to compete. The secretary told him this problem was near the forefront of their plans, the problem of making local businesses competitive. Credit mechanisms to serve smaller businesses are not there and we need to think differently about how to solve the problem.

Leigh Williams asked the secretary if the state would be up to speed in time to spend stimulus monies in the 18-month window provided by the Obama Administration? Secretary Johansson replied that the state would have plans laid out in the next month to meet time demands. He also suggested that business groups could help spread the word and provide needed outreach and follow-up.

Ms. Williams also suggested that the state make certain that small businesses were at the table. Some were not in a position to join membership groups but might still bring value to the state. The secretary let her know that seminars were free of charge and that the state wanted to reach out to those businesses as well.

Geoffrey Pohanka talked about the inclination some political leaders had to raise taxes in the face of declining revenues. Mr. Pohanka referenced the tax increase on those making more than \$250K, a tax that would affect small business owners. Mr. Pohanka then spoke of the legislative plan to reduce carbon emissions as a significant handicap to the state. Mr. Johansson said the taxes on those making \$250K were a sunset of President Bush's tax cuts and that the state was the home to many patents for alternative energy while manufacturing and technical offices for those ideas were overseas.

Mr. Pohanka countered with questions of reliability and availability of alternative energy sources. Secretary Johansson stated that we need a shared vision on the science and we need to then find the economic opportunities in these sources.

David Byrd, Deputy County Administrative Officer for Government Operations and Environmental Services asked the next questions. He thanked the secretary and said that he appreciated his enthusiasm. He emphasized the importance of working with all cabinet secretaries on road projects in the state as significant economic drivers. He then mentioned that Prince George's suffered more in cuts than all other counties in the state combined. Mr. Byrd then asked that the secretary recognize the importance of road projects around Andrews and Konterra. Following up on Secretary Johansson's comments regarding GSA, Mr. Byrd also asked for the secretary's help in getting GSA not just into the state, but into Prince George's County. Secretary Johansson said that road projects are connected. One-third of \$2.1 billion worth of projects that were cut from the budget are shovel ready and those projects will be first when the stimulus monies arrive.

Wayne Curry suggested that the state remember that it is sometimes important to play favorites, especially when remembering Prince George's County, the county that brought the governor his margin of victory in the 2006 election, given that the election was won by 110,000 votes and he garnered 120,000 votes in the county.



County Police Chief (second from left) receives honors from the Roundtable Board. Chief Hylton is joined by (l to r) Pres. & CEO M.H. Jim Estepp, Board Chair Tim Adams, FOP Lodge 89 1st VP Dean Jones and County Deputy CAO David Byrd

We then honored, with framed letters and awards, our public safety leaders in attendance.

David Byrd was then officially introduced to the group as our next speaker. Mr. Byrd started by thanking Mr. Estep for his time as his councilman and then he thanked Wayne Curry and Leigh Williams before mentioning he owned a “Pohanka” car.

He then took a moment to thank our public safety guests, saying, “If there’s no handle on this, we can’t encourage growth.” He then spoke of the importance of business, especially in a time where the residential market is floundering. He talked about a hedge fund in New York that was looking to invest \$10 million in the county and he spoke of DC United’s probable move into the county and the possible expansion of the BRAC Zone around Andrews by upwards of fifty percent. Mr. Byrd said we must grow, even if it is only at “a snail’s pace.” At the end of the next fiscal year, the county will be in a position to help more.

Mr. Byrd closed by discussing the county’s push for GSA, starting with trying to get HHS to leave Montgomery for Prince George’s County. Mr. Byrd also explained his new role as the head of Administrative Services, meaning he will now be in charge of services both external and internal for the county. He had just had his first briefing for the additional responsibilities.

We were then joined by former 89th Airlift Wing Commander (And Roundtable Board Member) Brigadier General (Retired) **John I. Pray, Jr.** General Pray’s last governmental post was as Executive Secretary of the *National Security Council*. He opened with a joke about how difficult it must be to recognize him now that his hair has grown out. When he was a member of this group, he helped shape Prince George’s County. With the NSC, he was helping to shape the world. Of course, 192 other countries wanted the same thing, to shape the rest of the world to the greatest benefit of their own countries.

General Pray also took a moment to commend **Col. Shepro** for the Community Leadership Summit meeting at Andrews and he called **Col. Harrison** a great officer. General Pray let us know that everything NSC prepared was considered the President’s personal property and thus, nothing transferred to the new administration. His office worked very hard with archives personnel to assist the new administration in getting up to speed globally.

He called the position a marvelous opportunity to serve this community and this country. Everyone in the room should feel “comfortable and confident” with the current administration. He also appreciated the challenges associated with being part of the corporate world. His new position as Executive Vice-President, Systems and Proposal Engineering Company, had provided many opportunities, including learning more about the “corporate community language” he first heard as a member of the Roundtable board.

DaRayl Davis gave his financial prognosis next, making it clear that the sky was not falling, even with international confidence shaken. He reported that \$50 trillion had been lost globally during the current economic downturn. He then added that recession often brings about opportunities, creating partnerships instead of problems. The stimulus would help, if from nothing else but the fact that there are more federal buildings located in Maryland than in any other state.

Mr. Davis talked of the state’s plan to create 66,000 new jobs in the next two years as a result of the stimulus money entering the state. He also mentioned that the federal government was spending \$650 million to build a new Homeland Security building and suggested they provide money to consolidate the state’s existing facilities into Prince George’s County (A prospect first spoken of by then Mayor O’Malley at a March 2006 Roundtable Board Meeting). He then got a

chance to tout his radio show, heard every Tuesday, from 2:00-3:00pm on 1580am or online at Bigtalker.com.

Col. Shepro spoke next, joking that he was at the “shallow end” of the intellectual pool of our guests. He also took a moment to congratulate M.H. Jim Estepp and James R. Estepp for their efforts in pulling off the Andrews Summit, held on the base, one week before our BOD meeting.

The Colonel expressed the importance of relationships, both internal, like the one that the 316th and 89th share, and external, such as the relationships with the Roundtable and the Andrews Alliance and the outside community. Colonel Shepro also discussed the possibility that the 11th Wing, currently at Bolling (Becoming a Naval controlled base), might be relocating to Andrews as well and that opportunities could arise from those additional changes on the base.

Mr. Estepp, in his introduction for **Col. Harrison** said that at the change of command where Col. Harrison took over for General Woodward, it appeared that most of the State of Delaware had made the trip with Col. Harrison and that this was a testimony to his outreach and communication skills. He also added that he felt this was the best team in place at Andrews in a long time.

Continuing the theme, Col. Harrison thanked the people in the room, including General Pray and Col. Shepro, for making him feel completely inadequate. He also thanked Mr. Estepp for welcoming he and his wife to the community. He then downplayed his talents saying that he made a career out of being in the right place at the right time. He also added that the 89th can only succeed working hand-in-hand with the 316th. Col. Harrison is a Rhodes Scholar.

Col. Harrison also spoke of getting used to the new administration, with the addition of two young daughters.

He then thanked General Pray for setting the standard at the 89th, one of perfection. The colonel wants to recruit the best people his team can to join them and recruit them not only into Andrews, but into the community.

He closed by saying he would do whatever he could to help make our organization successful.

Eddy Campbell, Chair of the Roundtable’s Education Committee mentioned the hand that the group had in selecting 23 students that received full scholarships from the University of Maryland for tuition there.

He then introduced **Rose Colby** from Prince George’s County Parks and Recreation and she and a colleague spoke briefly regarding the Teen Cotillion, an event that teaches not only formalized Dance training, but the debs and beaus selected to participate have opportunities to attend life skills workshops that cover resume writing, interviewing skills, etiquette, social skills, family communication, confidence and self-esteem building, team building and service learning projects.