

Chamber Education Committee / Business Advisory Council Minutes April 22, 2025

Location Host: Stark Economic Development Board 400 3rd St SE, Canton, Ohio 44702 (3RD Floor Open Space)

Attendance

Emil Alecusan	Mitchell Baxter	Rick Baxter	Barb Bennett	Martin Bowe
Debbie Busby	Scott Campbell	Andrea Capuano	Joseph Chaddock	Matt Cola
Jeff Dafler	Chris DiLoreto	Shaun Eller	Sharla Elton	Brent Fatzinger
Dave Fischer	Patrick Gerber	Todd Hawke	Gary Kandel	Jennifer Kessel
Janelle Lee	Dan Lowmiller	Stephen Mackenzie	Robert McBride	Adam McKenzie
Melinda McNutt	Chad Merritt	John Milan	Whitney Reinhart	John Richard
Tiffany Rogers	Joe Stella	Nathan Stutz	Lisa Talbert	Christine Taylor
Rachel VanDyke	Tom Venturella	Jennifer Warner	Brett Yeagley	

1. Welcome and Call to Order

John Richard called the meeting to order at 12:03pm.

2. Approval of agenda and March 10, 2025, minutes

John Richard asked for approval of today's agenda, as well as the minutes from the March 10th meeting. Chris DiLoreto made a motion to approve the agenda and minutes, and Barb Bennett seconded. Upon being put to a vote, the motion carried.

3. Stark Economic Development Board (SEDB) Welcome and Update on current events – Stephen MacKenzie, President, Stark Economic Development Board

Stephen MacKenzie introduced himself and explained the relationship between the SEDB and Strengthening Stark and noted that the board is in the process of creating a new website, branding, and marketing to align the two organizations. Stephen stated the mission of the Stark Economic Development Board is to create investment, jobs, and tax dollars, focusing on traded sector industries and emerging technologies, while Strengthening Stark aims to create a more vibrant economy and ensure everyone in the community reaches their potential.

4. Presentation: SEDB – Stephen MacKenzie, President Stark Economic Development Board

Stephen MacKenzie stated that SEDB secured the second-most projects in Team NEO's 14-county region, second only to Cuyahoga County. Stephen stated the SEDB targets 200 company visits per year for business retention and expansion opportunities. He described the formal alignment of SEDB and Strengthening Stark as a best practice merger that focuses on traditional economic development and community development as key areas. Stephen discussed the strategies of Strengthening Stark, including marketing, driving enrollment for in demand jobs, expanding diversity in employment and driving real work innovation. He described workforce development as a critical area, along with developing shovel-ready sites, supporting community development and addressing the need for affordable housing. Stephen noted that a larger event to discuss the housing issue is being planned for June to address housing gaps and affordability. Stephen discussed demographic challenges in the region, including a "gray wave" of retirees, which reinforces the need for workforce development to develop talent, attract from outside of the area and re-skilling existing workers. Stephen also explained the need to fill a marketing and communications person to promote the region's successes and resources along with the importance of partnership and engagement with the Chamber of Commerce and Stark Education Partnership.

5. Presentation of Major Events for 2025-2026 Document – Christine Taylor, Stark Education Partnership

Christine Taylor explained the Stark State STEM program information sheets, for grades K-12, that are looking for volunteer judges. Christine also mentioned that the Boot Camp on June 3rd – 5th is "sold out" and requested that no one forward the invitation or invite anyone else to attend. Christine noted that in the fall there will be a similar type of opportunity for teachers interested. She also requested that educators get the word out about events early so transportation can be arranged. An electronic version of the major events sheet will be sent out to school communities.

6. Future Planning for Education Committee – John Richard, Stark Education Partnership

John Richard stated that May will be the last CRCC Education / BAC Committee meeting until August because a break is taken in June and July. John explained that the next year's focus will be to host meetings at colleges and universities, and next year's planning will be the discussion at the May meeting which will be held at the Cultural Center.

7. Community Partner Update – Joe Stella, Akron Canton Builds

Joe Stella discussed the upcoming expo being held October 7th & 8th for schools, where students can get hands-on experience with job sites and training opportunities. This is the 3rd year, and last year there were 2,000 students from 50

districts. Joe had a flyer and advised everyone that their website has all the information to become an exhibitor or get involved. Joe also stated that the expo has resulted in direct hires of students.

8. Community Partner Update – Rachel VanDyke, Legacy Project of Stark County

Rachel VanDyke introduced the Legacy Project of Stark County, and the focus on mobilizing communities to support students and families. Rachel stated the organization has expanded to K-12 and has programs in 22 school buildings and community-based programs. Rachel noted the importance of mentorship and the need for more mentors, along with opportunities for business leaders to get involved.

9. Adjourn:

John Richard requested a motion to adjourn at 12:50pm. Chris DiLoreto made the motion.