

Regulatory Fairness Board October 9th 2013 University of Maine at Farmington, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Attending:

Matt Dunlap, Chair

Doug Smith, member

Pat Kuhl, member

Peggy Schaffer, Small Business Advocate

Debbey French, Tech Support Sec. of State's Office

Paul and Jean Gilbert, Jay (Rep. Gilbert, House District 87)

Sun Journal Newspaper

The meeting was broadcast over Go To Meeting. One person attended on –line.

Secretary Dunlap opened the meeting with introductions at 4:00. David Brenerman of Portland has been appointed by the Senate President to replace Michael Cote, who resigned earlier in the year. David was unable to attend this meeting. The Chair requested Small Business Advocate give update on work of the office.

Small Business Advocate gave a brief report on activities of the office, and talked about the potential of the board to look into some of the barriers presented by professional licensure, especially to new comers to Maine. The immigrant and refugee community settling in many parts of Maine often come with existing professional skills, but find it difficult to navigate around some of Maine's professional licensure structures. The advocate asked the board if this was an issue they wanted further information on. The board was curious as to whether the issues were structural (in the aggregate) or were just on an individual basis. The SBA pointed to the issue of hair braiding. Currently Maine's law requires a cosmetology license, needing 1500 hours of internship or going to cosmetology school to be able to practice simple hair braiding. This has been a significant barrier to refugees starting what is typically a small business in the countries and regions they came from. Maine's Department of Professional and Financial Regulation has no interest in licensing the practice, but the law current prevents these new Americans from starting small businesses with this traditional practice. The board, at this time, had no interest in pursuing this because it would require statutory changes in the 2nd regular session, which is reserved for emergencies only.

The Advocate suggested to improve attendance at RFB meetings the board work with the Bangor Chamber for the next meeting to piggy back on an activity that small businesses were already attending. The Board agreed, and the advocate will work with the Bangor Chamber of Commerce to set up meeting before the end of the year.

The board discussed a critical issue for small business – access to capital. Pat K noted lack of access to capital was one of the key issues many small business fail to thrive. Doug Smith noted many large corporations have significant cash holdings, but none of those funds are flowing into Maine businesses – large or small. He believes Maine's regulatory structure discourages those large corporate investments into Maine. It was suggested the board look into what regulatory structures present barriers to small and large businesses, and determine if there is a role for the board in helping address some of those regulatory barriers to improve access to capital. At the

January meeting, the Small Business Advocate will invite FAME and SBA to come and talk about the issues those organizations see as barriers for small businesses.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00.