Economic Recovery Committee
Innovation Subcommittee
(Life Science, Tech, Energy, and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem)

Meeting Notes
August 27, 2020, 8-10 AM
Virtual via Zoom

Subcommittee Members present: Betsy Biemann (Chair), Adam Lachman, Ben Waxman, Brian Hubbell, Chanel Lewis, Deanna Sherman, Tim Agnew, Vaughn Woodruff, Martha Bentley (staff)

1. Life Science Panel with Q&A
8-9 AM

Kathryn Biberstein, formerly Executive VP, Chief Administrative & Legal Officer, Alkermes, Inc.
Judy Sproule, Director of Strategic Initiatives, MDI Biological Laboratory
Agnieszka Carpenter, Executive Director, Bioscience Association of Maine
Toby Ahrens, Program Director, Focus Maine

Chanel Lewis, Head of Diversity & Inclusion, IDEXX (in attendance as ERC member)

Key Themes Discussed: Maine’s current life science strengths are in diagnostics and manufacturing, sectors that pay relatively high wages and good benefits compared to average Maine jobs. Maine has opportunities around proximity to the Boston metro area and vibrant Massachusetts life science cluster as well as comparatively low cost for office space and manufacturing facilities. There is a disconnect between employment opportunities and potential employees, including under-represented foreign trained professionals and post-doc students. The Hubs of Excellence model outlined in the plan has great promise but needs work and investment to be realized. Panelists submitted written comments with detailed recommendations, available here (scroll to bottom of webpage for most recent meetings).

2. Energy Panel with Q&A
9-10 AM

Marty Grohman, Executive Director, E2Tech
John Ferland, President, ORPC
Kay Aikin, CEO, Dynamic Grid
Mike Cassata, Chief Development Officer, Biofine Developments Northeast
Marina Bowie, Executive Director, Biobased Maine

Vaughn Woodruff, CEO, Insource Renewables (in attendance as ERC member)
Key Themes Discussed: The panelists represented a diversity of sub-sectors within energy innovation but did have some common themes shared with the Subcommittee. Workforce issues continue to be a challenge – including the base trade industries needed to support energy infrastructure. The under-utilization of foreign-trained professionals was again emphasized. The panelists emphasized the importance of keeping policies, regulators, and those tasked with the implementation of policies abreast and up-to-date with economic growth and opportunities in this sector. These also need to keep pace with changes within the industry while taking a very long view. Federal and State priority alignment can assist with financing and development. The State should use its purchasing power to prove out innovations. The Climate Council recommendations and goals should be harmonized with those of the ERC and economic growth priorities of the ERC should be added. Panelists submitted written comments with detailed recommendations, available here (scroll to bottom of webpage for most recent meetings).