



Virginia Israel Advisory Board

Office of the Governor

Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting

April 23, 2013 10:00 AM – 11:45 AM, House Room 2, Richmond, Virginia

Attended in Person:

Mel Chaskin, Donald Ferguson, Fran Fisher, Sophie Hoffman, Jay Ipson, Joel Kanter, Lala Korall, Julie Krachman, Jay Myerson, David Oblon, Timothy Powers, Ralph Robbins, Carrie Roth (for Secretary Cheng)

Attended via Conference Call:

Eileen Filler-Corn, Todd House, Steven Lederman

1. Board Minutes of December 11, 2012 were presented.
2. **Gateway USA: Agrotech Program.**

Ralph gave a summary of VIAB's goals for the Agrotech Program: the potential for economic development and job growth in the Commonwealth of Virginia, particularly in the Southwest part of the State. He reported on the successful visit of the VIAB delegation to Israel which included Dr. Joel Marcy, Head of the Food Department at Virginia Tech, Charles Green, marketing expert at the Virginia Department of Agriculture, financial experts from New River Ventures: Bob Mooney, Ted Chandler and Matt Rho, and Lala Korall and Ralph Robbins. Lala Korall and Julie Krachman reported on the process that VIAB used to select the companies to be interviewed in Israel including extensive research into Israel's agricultural sector, data mining, and telephone interviews. The major criteria included products commercialization ready or already in the marketplace. Meetings took place with eighteen companies, many of which took place at company facilities.

Next steps include follow up visits and visits by the companies to Virginia.

Virginia Tech Component

Ralph announced a teaming arrangement with Virginia Tech to headquarter the Agrotech Program at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center in Blacksburg. The program is called: Virginia **Israel Agrotech Commercialization Center (VIAC)** The goal of the center will be to provide a soft landing for Israeli companies into the Virginia agricultural ecosystem. Each Israeli company continuing in the program will establish a presence/headquarters in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Park. This will be used as a base for developing the Virginia market and will remain the base for future expansion into the remainder of the US. Ralph reported that the entire delegation has briefed Secretary Haymore and Secretary Cheng about the results of the Virginia Agrotech delegation to Israel. A VIAC "Advisory Board" has been established and includes Virginia Tech experts and individuals in the private sector.

Ralph also reported that the program will deploy VT students and Academic Interns to assist in developing feasibility studies.

Dr. Joe Marcy, Head of the VT Food Department and participant in the Agrotech Delegation to Israel, joined the meeting via teleconference. He reported that the delegation to Israel was very successful and important as part of the process for attracting the Israeli companies to Virginia. He reported that the companies were of very high quality, reaffirmed the importance of continuing the program and expressed his desire to continue a role in the VIAC program at Virginia Tech. He reported that the Dean of the School of Agricultural, Alan Grant, has been briefed and is very supportive of the program.

Ralph reported that he was going to return to Israel for about one week in May so that he could revisit the short list of eight Israeli companies with Delegate James Morefield of the Tazewell region who has pledged his total support for the program which, according to Delegate Morefield “could bring needed employment to the region.”

In response to a question by Sophie Hoffman concerning who will continue to drive the program, Ralph said that it will be necessary for him to spend about one week a month at Virginia Tech during the initial stages of the program over the next year. Ralph concluded by saying that in his opinion, if the program is successfully executed, the results could be transformational for the SW part of the State.

3. **Defense/HLS Program follow-up report.** Ralph reported that 4 of the 9 companies that participated in **Gateway USA: Defense & HLS** have established a presence in Virginia subsequent to the program. Follow up activities are taking place with all of the companies showing an interest in continuing the process.
4. **Coal Exporting:** Ralph reported that we have started discussion with several Virginia companies and Delegate James W. Morefield of the 3rd District to discuss the possibility of exporting coal to Israel. Delegate Morefield will accompany Ralph in Israel in early May to meet with the Israel National Coal Company that imports 95% of all coal to Israel. Ralph will continue to follow-up with this and report back to the board with any future developments.
5. **Wine Introduction:** Ralph noted that the wine introduction had been delayed but was back on track.
6. **Clearfarma.** Ralph reported that a new Israeli company that develops “functional foods” recently established a location at the Richmond Bio Par. They are already outgrowing their current facility and will probably seek a new larger location in Richmond.
7. **Emek Hefer Robotics:** VIAB hosted the Emek Hefer Robotics team to a dinner during their visit to the D.C. area to participate in the Regional Robotics Tournament.
8. **VIAB BOD Survey:** Julie Krachman reported on the results of the survey sent to all of the member of VIAB’s Board of Directors. The purpose of the survey was to determine the best way Board members could contribute to VIAB’s activities. Ralph suggested that each Board Member facilitate one connection that could lead to Israel-Virginia collaboration and job creation. Ralph thanked Board Member Aaron Roberts for his proactive efforts in identifying potential economic development opportunities for Southwest Virginia and for encouraging Delegate Morefield to join Ralph in Israel for a series of meetings including meetings with the Israel National Coal Company and the Agrotech companies on our short list.
9. Mel Chaskin reminded attendees that the VIAB Annual Report is on the VIAB website. (Location: <http://www.viab.org/#!minutes-of-board-of-directors-meetings/c23hm>) He also encouraged everyone to visit the web site to review VIAB accomplishments.
10. The Next Meeting will be August 1, 2013.