



Virginia Israel Advisory Board

Office of the Governor

Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting

Aug 1 10:00 AM – 11:45 PM, House Room 1, Richmond, Virginia

Attended In Person: Mel Chaskin, Craig Einhorn, Donald Ferguson (OAG), Fran Fisher, Jay Ipson, Lala Korall, Larry Krakover, David Kuhn (VA Tech), Chuck Lessin, Jay Myerson, David Oblon, Aaron Roberts, Ralph Robbins

Via Conference Call: Eileen Filler-Corn, Steven Lederman

1. Board Minutes of April 23, 2013 were presented.
2. **Gateway USA: Agrotech Program.**

Ralph reviewed VIAB's goals for the Agrotech Program and the progress that has been made. Goals are economic development in the State and job growth in the Commonwealth of Virginia, particularly in the Southwest part of the State. Ralph reviewed the progress made in establishing the **Virginia Israel Agrotech Commercialization Center** at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. The points discussed include:

- Four areas of concentration: aquaculture, greenhouse programs, poultry (egg layers), packaging onsite waste treatment.
- The VIAC, which is part of the VIAB, has been opened at VT and is an operating office.
- The largest project under consideration is in the aquaculture field. This could be a \$140 million project with over 400 jobs created. Ralph explained that this could represent an entirely new industry for the region as the assets of the area match the needs of the project: close to VT for expert support, available labor that can be retrained, potential for community involvement eg training programs can be established at the SW Community College, and support at all levels of the region.
- The VIAB in cooperation with the locality is determining how we can elevate the largest project, Aquaculture, to "transformational status", which would allow for more state funding and support. One of the prime criteria for this will be a project that will add a new "industry" to the area. We believe this qualification is satisfied. The VIAB with the help of Chuck Lessin and the locality will explore the best way to approach this challenge.
- Ralph reported that three interns from VT are working on the VIAC program. One of the interns (student project manager) will join Ralph in Israel for meetings with all of the Israeli companies involved with the VIAB program. The intern will in turn brief another four academic interns who will work during the fall semester on the program.
- Ralph reported that a dinner/reception/presentation was organized by Delegate Morefield. Twenty people participated including the US project manager of the

aquaculture company. Other stakeholders from throughout the state including VDACS and the Hampton Aquaculture Extension Services attended. Ralph explained that the purpose of the receptions was to present the aquaculture project to a larger group so the entire group could focus on the goal and challenges in developing a major project like this.

- Dr. David Kuhn, Aquaculture Program Director, Virginia Tech, provided a summary of the Aquaculture program from Virginia Tech's perspective. The business school is also working on a validation analysis of the program.
 - Ralph described the biggest challenge to be that of funding, but he reported there are reasons to be optimistic that a project as important as this will find additional sources of funding. The VIAB is facilitating this process.
 - Ralph reported that the company's executives from Israel plan to visit Virginia in October.
 - *[Subsequent to the Board Meeting, the Aquaculture project was given a code name: **Project Jonah**. All Board members are asked to refer to the project by this code name. Leaked information could jeopardize funding opportunities from the State.]*
3. **Update: chickpea development.** Ralph reported that he met with Dr. Harbans Bhardwaj who is responsible for the chickpea research in the State that began with the introduction of him to Sabra when the company began operations about three years ago. Harbans believes the widespread growing of chickpeas in Virginia will begin as planned in three years.
 4. **ClearFarma.** Ralph reported that the company, which specializes in the development of ingredients for "functional foods", is expanding and now has approximately six people working on a part-time or full-time basis. They are also considering moving into expanded space at a new location in Richmond.
 5. **Coal Exporting:** Ralph reported that we continue to follow up with Delegate Morefield on the potential for selling coal to Israel. Israel is ready to buy a sample quantity (about 170,000 tons) for a trial. To date, experts involved from the Virginia side report that our coal, while meeting the required standards, is \$15-\$20 higher than the current price the Israeli's pay for their coal which was approximately \$84 per ton landed. We will continue to pursue this.
 6. **Results of HLS/Defense Gateway program:** Ralph reported that a CEO of a fifth company from the nine that participated in the HLS/Program in October, 2012, returned for an intensive two day visit to the area. We are optimistic that this company will be the fifth to open an office in Virginia.
 7. **Qball opens in Life Science Center.** Ralph reported that QBall, a computer infrastructure company working in life sciences, is the 10th Israeli company that opened in the Richmond Bio Center.
 8. The Next Meeting will be December 5, 2013.
 9. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 am.