

Marshall Islands Chamber of Commerce

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Meeting Minutes

Friday, March 14, 2008

Marshall Islands Resort

Meeting called to order by Vice President Mike Slinger at 12:01 P.M. Approximately 50 members and guests were in attendance. The next regular meeting will be on Friday, April 11, 2008.

- **Minutes** – approved electronically prior to the meeting
- **Treasurer's report** - \$1,473.79 BOG balance
- **Guests**
 - Representatives of the American Embassy
 - Representatives of the Taiwan Embassy
 - Biram Stege, Secretary, Ministry of Education
 - Marie Maddison, Director, National Training Council
 - Romeo Alfred, Kwajalein Range Services
 - Jeff Robertson, US State Department, Pacific Island Nations' Public Diplomacy Coordinator, US Embassy, Suva Fiji
 - NobuTaka Ishikure, Executive Advisor, Japan Airlines
 - Floyd K. Takeuchi, Publisher, Pacific Magazine
 - Vinny Ng, Project Director, Youth Bridge Global MIHS Shakespeare Production
 - Jessica Swale, Artistic Director, Youth Bridge Global MIHS Shakespeare Production
- **Youth Bridge Global, Inc. – Marshall Islands Theater Production 2008**

Vinny Ng, Project Director, and Jessica Swale, Artistic Director, showed a brief visual presentation of what will be this year's MIHS production of William Shakespeare's A Comedy of Errors beginning April 22nd. They are requesting financial contributions to augment the approximate \$10,000 that they've raised toward their goal of a \$15,000 budget. For the past four years, Dr. Andrew Garrod and a team of Dartmouth students have worked with MIHS students and successfully staged performances in Majuro. This year's production will also travel to Laura.

- **Jeff Robertson, US State Department, Pacific Island Nations' Public Diplomacy Coordinator, US Embassy, Suva Fiji**

Mr. Robertson was the Peace Corps Director in Pohnpei from 1991 to 1994. He is a US Foreign Service Officer that has now been given the responsibility of media and cultural affairs for eleven Pacific nations as part of the US's "Pacific Re-engagement" program.

- **NobuTaka Ishikure, Executive Advisor, Japan Airlines**

Mr. Ishikure explained Japan Airline's (JAL) experience in Saipan and its current interest in the Marshall Islands. JAL wants to make night flights into Majuro. This will require some changes at the Majuro airport such as improved lighting. JAL will wait until the Marshall Islands has a sufficient policy framework, airport infrastructure, and tourism infrastructure before it resumes flights. He observed that "a nice place to visit is a nice place to live," and he encouraged the Marshallese people to support tourism for this reason.

- **Committee Reports**

Business Affairs – Carlos Domnick

I've completed the recruitment of committee members. Toni Redy, Branch Manager of Bank of Guam, will handle financial services. Dan Fitzpatrick, General Manager of Air Marshall Islands, will handle transportation issues. David Strauss, Attorney and NTA Director, will handle communications issues. Neal Skinner, Owner of EZ Price Mart, will handle business and trade issues. Ben Chutaro, Consultant and Manager of Bako Divers, will also handle business and trade issues.

The April 11th Chamber meeting will feature NTA and telecommunications issues. My committee will invite the Directors and management of NTA and the Ministry of Transportation and Communication. We will ask the general membership to send us questions that we'll give to our guests in advance of the meeting to allow them to prepare their answers.

Dan Fitzpatrick reported the current status of Air Marshall Islands (AMI). AMI received significant funding from Taiwan in January. This allowed AMI to purchase parts for the Dash 8 plane. He expects that the Dash 8 will be operational soon to service those country airfields that can handle it. A team from Germany will arrive in the Marshall Islands at the end of this month to independently evaluate the Dornier plane. AMI will not be able to handle the Russian divers that have been planning their trip to Bikini for two years next week. The outer islands that are normally served by the Dornier will not receive service in the near future. Scheduled service will start up slowly, and there will be no ability to makeup missed flights with only one plane operating.

David Strauss informed Chamber members to submit politely written questions or complains regarding NTA to him by email. He will submit all responsibly written issues to NTA management for explanation or resolution.

Carlos Domnick informed Chamber members that his committee will become involved in drafting Chamber position papers. His committee is also working on a "Getting Credit Survey."

Chamber Affairs – David Paul

I'll have a full report at the next meeting.

Public Affairs – Ben Graham

Don Hess has joined my committee and will continue with his personal interest in environmental issues. Bruce Bilimon has joined my committee and will represent government issues. Dr. Pinano has joined my committee and will represent health issues. Patrick Lane and Richard Li have joined my committee and will represent education issues.

I've just received copies of 20 bills and resolutions that have been introduced to this session of the Nitijela. In response to a request from the floor, Ben Graham briefly read the titles of each of the bills and resolutions. Most of the resolutions appear to relate to activities of the Trust Company of the Marshall Islands regarding country international "protocol" adoption. MISSA is again being targeted regarding a lowering of the age at which an earnings test would no longer be required. There is a bill to lower the usury rate to 16% and invalidate legally binding notes *ex post facto*. Ben Graham informed the general membership that his committee will sit with members of the Nitijela in an attempt to schedule bill hearings on a timelier basis.

Ben Graham reported that the first quarter's cost of living jumped to 3%.

Bruce Bilimon informed the general membership that from April 28th to May 2nd approximately 50 people will be attending an Oceania Customs Association meeting here in Majuro. He also informed the general membership that there is a new Customs policy regarding the importation of tobacco and alcohol products. Effective immediately all import declaration forms for these items will have to be approved by two government officials – one of which is his signature or his designee in his absence. Also, all payments will be made to the RMI Treasury and not to different organizations. On April 1st the new Customs software will be launched. Gary Short is on island now to facilitate that process. In response to a question from the floor, he reported that those companies that need computer assistance or software would be assisted by his office even to the extent of his office providing a public workstation for private sector use.

- **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) – Ben Graham, Biram Stege, and Marie Maddison (Pat Lane assisting)**

Ben Graham presented a brief and useful framework to envision TVET. There is a supply side that provides training, and a demand side composed of employers that consume TVET trained workers. Within this framework the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of TVET can be evaluated by comparing results to "inputs."

Marie Maddison thanked the Chamber for this first time invitation. She acknowledged the TVET Steering Committee members, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Research and Development. The National Training Council does

not provide TVET. Rather, it evaluates TVET providers and awards funding. Some of the TVET providers are: CMI, USP, MOE, NGOs, and KRS.

Biram Stege presented a TVET PowerPoint presentation. MOE has added vocational electives to Marshall Islands High School (MIHS), Northern Islands High School (NIHS), Jaliut High School (JHS), National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) – pre-vocational education, and Kwajalein High School (KAHS). Career counseling is now available in all high schools. A recent test has shown an increase in English and Math proficiency. It is slowly improving. There is an upcoming (two weeks) symposium of “Vocationalizing” the K-12 Curriculum.

Marie Maddison continued with the TVET PowerPoint presentation. There is a vocational education strategic plan for 2007- 2012. The target age is 16-24. There are 3000 unemployed and not in school youth in this age category. The National Training Council (NTC) needs training providers. Basic education and life skills are NTC mandates. NTC is not a training provider. It monitors and serves in partnership with training providers such as NGOs and the private sector. Kwajalein Range Services (KRS) is a good example of a TVET provider.

Romeo Alfred briefly discussed KRS TVET initiatives. He has worked on Kwajalein for 15 years. He is an NTC Director. The goal of KRS TVET training is to replace off island hires with local workers. They foresaw the present reductions in force and designed some of their TVET training to allow workers with skills that were expected to be eliminated to transfer to other jobs. Their training includes ethics, and they follow what is called a progressive discipline policy. They’ve engaged in fixed wing, rotary wing, automotive, and pharmacy TVET.

Marie Maddison continued with the TVET PowerPoint presentation. NTC receives funding from the US Supplemental Education Grant, the RMI General Fund, and the Non-resident Workers fund. MOE manages NTC funds. At present, approximately \$700,000 is available. But, this amount is decreasing. One of the weaknesses in our private sector is the absence of formal training plans. This is one reason why KRS was able to qualify as a TVET provider. They had a good training plan. NTC has not received any proposals yet from the private sector other than KRS.

Secretary’s note (courtesy of Patrick Lane): “One thing that the people who left [early] may not have gotten, which is really important, is that NTC will give money to the private sector to run its own training programs, but they have to make the proposals.”

Meeting adjourned at 1:45 PM.

Minutes prepared by:

Jim McLean

Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the RMI

Presentation to the Majuro Chamber of Commerce
March 14, 2008

Presentation Outline

- What is TVET?
 - What is the demand for TVET?
 - What is the current supply of TVET?
 - Where are the gaps in the TVET system?
 - Questions for the Chamber.
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What is TVET?

- Technical and vocation education and training (TVET) equips people with the knowledge, practical skills and attitudes required for the labor market or subsistence lifestyle. It includes formal and non-formal programs that prepare people for occupations in the modern economy and non-wage positions in the informal sector.
 - “Formal” programs = in schools
 - “Non-formal” programs = out of schools
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TVET Providers in the RMI

- College of the Marshall Islands (CMI)
 - University of South Pacific (USP)
 - Ministry of Education (MOE)
 - National Training Council (NTC) – one of several
 - Other Ministries/Agencies/PSC
 - State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs)
 - Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
 - Private Sector
 - Local Governments
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Current TVET Programs in the RMI Formal Sector

- MOE High Schools:
 - MIHS: Vocational “trade” electives (carpentry, woodworking, sewing, automotive, cooking); hospitality, secretarial, bookkeeping, accounting; health academy; teacher academy; senior practicum; computer literacy.
 - NIHS: Marshallese skills, teacher academy, agriculture, carpentry, computer literacy.
 - JHS: Agriculture, aquaculture, trades, computer literacy.
 - NVTI: Prevocational remedial program (Math, English, and Marshallese), computer literacy.
 - KAHS: Prevocational programs, computer literacy, first graduates this May.
 - Career counseling beginning at all schools.
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Current TVET Programs -- Formal Sector (cont'd)

- “Vocationalizing the curriculum”
 - New emphasis throughout K-12.
 - Life & work skills (punctuality, work ethic, personal responsibility)
 - Marshallese skills
 - Introduction to hands-on learning from the earliest grades.
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Current TVET Programs -- Formal Sector (cont'd)

- Post-secondary
 - USP: Piloting pre-vocational literacy and numeracy programs, on-going vocational courses (librarians, paralegals, education, etc)
 - CMI: Nursing program, accounting, marine science, education. Likely to reexamine vocational offerings once off WASC probation
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NTC Strategic Plan, 2007-2012

1. **Demand:**
 - *a young, growing & mobile population,*
 - *a flat economy & unemployment growing,*
 - *education & skills deficiencies impede development*
 2. **Supply:** Extremely limited TVET offerings in RMI
 3. **Guiding Principles:** *equitable, responsive, responsible, committed, determined, consistent, sustainable*
 4. **Areas of Focus:**
 - Basic Education & Life Skills,
 - Sustainable Livelihoods,
 - Technical & Vocational Training (NVT),
 - Employment & Ethics,
 - Policy & Partnerships, &
 - Organizational Development
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2007-8 Training Initiatives

1. Basic Education & Life Skills Training

YTYIH Basic Skills & Capacity Building

SEG FY 2006 \$123,760 Award - Completed

Leadership/Life Skills Training;

SEG FY 2007 Award: \$55,080

Pneuma Ministries Operation Rising Star

SEG FY 2007 Award: \$53,618 (63)

USP Basic Education for Unschooled Youth

SEG FY 2007 Award: \$25,000 (25)

Expected: CMI Workforce Development Training in June SEG FY 2007: \$50,000 (25) for 3 components: Boot Camp, Immersion, Internship

2. Sustainable Livelihood Training Projects

CMI Training, SEG FY 2006 Imiej Oyster Shell Handicraft Training \$22,957, & Arno Marine Ornamental Training SEG FY 06 \$12,900

Juren Ae Training, SEG Sewing SEG FY 2006 \$33,278 (25) & Handicrafts Class SEG FY 2007 \$40,000 (25)

Rukjenleen Home Sewing & Basic Ed/Life Skills, SEG FY 2007 \$23,000 (25) yet to begin

3. Technical-Vocational Training

KRS Employment & Vocational Skills Training. NRWF \$100,000 Reserved. A Pilot Certificated Project with 2nd largest employer. Internship Completed-\$14,000, Auto Electricity – Completed for 10 KRS & 2 Majuro participants \$28,000. Basic Education/Food Services upgrading \$30,000. Total awards to date: \$72,000 (72%)

MIDB Self-Help Housing Basic Construction Skills Training.

NRWF FY07 \$52,000 Award – Completed Basic Construction Training (14 homes, 10 trainees), 2nd SEG FY 2007 \$52,000 (12) ongoing

Dijo em Ukoj Basic Construction Skills Training. SEG FY 06 /NRWF FY07 \$46,140 (30) 20 houses completed

WAM Vocational Skills Training. SEG FY 07 \$170,000 Award, Basic Carpentry, Boatbuilding, Woodworking Training (22)

3. Technical-Vocational Training (Cont'd)

NTA Technology Training. NRWF \$28,000, Web Design Training & Basic Telephony Techniques & Protocols (15) – participants from NTA, private & public sectors

Ongoing Job Corps Recruitment. A entry level paid vocational training for max 2 years. Recruitment sites – Kwajalein & Majuro. Average annual enrollment - 80 Marshallese youth (18 to 24 yrs intake), Annual waiting list – 180 average (some are attending CMI, USP...) Two groups: preparatory at Maui, and fast-tracked – directly into vocational training centers.

Other Internships: Kwajalein Cultural Center Admin Intern SEG FY 2006 \$10,000 completed, SEG FY 2006 USP Accounting Intern \$6,200 (completed)

Additional Training to be offered through USP

-- Short-Term Business Training

-- Hospitality & Tourism Training (under discussion)

Summary -Current TVET Programs Non -Formal Sector

- Coordinated by NTC
 - Many providers: WAM, KRS, MIDB, Juren Ae, Job Corps, Pneuma Ministries
 - Include automotive, construction, carpentry, job skills, sewing, handicrafts, pharmacy.
 - Funded by grants from NTC (NRWF & SEG)
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NTC Sources of Funds (FY 2008)

1. **Management Account: General Fund (8%)**
 - Amount FY 06, FY 07, FY 08: \$60,180
 2. **Funds (Statutory): Special Fund (24%)**
 - National Training Fund - *Establishment* (PL 1991-140), The Non-Resident Workers Fund - *Levy* (P.L. 1987-6)
 - FY 08 \$174,631
 - Accumulated Collected Owed NTC \$600,000 (in paper & with MOF, & to be made available in affordable installments)
 3. **Supplemental Education Grant (67%)**
 - SEG Matrix 8 (MOE Outcome #8)
 - RMI FY 08 (\$486,004) (SEG FY 07)
 4. **Total: \$720,815**
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Regional TVET Opportunities

- RMI Government cannot provide specific training in all areas.
 - Must take advantage of regional opportunities
 - Australia Pacific Technical College
 - Enrollees needed now (10-15 a year in various trade areas & Tourism & Hospitality)
 - Advanced training (enrollees must have 1400 hours of work experience)
 - Graduates receive Level 3 & 4 certificates
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Regional TVET Opportunities (cont'd)

- Fiji Institute of Technology
 - Attendance can be funded by RMI Scholarship
 - Guam Community College, Palau Community College, Hawaii Community Colleges (Pell & RMI grants)
 - Job Corps – Several Centers accepting RMI trainees. A training & job placement program
 - Regional Workforce Development Scheme (still in development) coordinated by national US & regional Micronesian entities
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Where to from here?

- Greatest need: Improved literacy and numeracy.
 - Need: Improved job skills (punctuality and work ethic) and life skills.
 - Build capacity in and for the Marshall Islands.
 - Symposium on TVET to refine overall strategy in two weeks.
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Questions for the Chamber

- Are businesses willing to send semi-skilled workers off for several months to take advantage of regional training opportunities?
 - What is the Chamber's vision for economic development in the RMI? What sort of jobs will be created? (TVET is demand-driven)
 - What training can Chamber members provide (apprenticeships/internships)?
 - What businesses are willing to support the MIHS senior practicum?
 - What can the Chamber do to improve tax collection?
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