

Marshall Islands Chamber of Commerce

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Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 31, 2010

Marshall Islands Resort

Meeting called to order by President Steve Phillips at 12:00 P.M. Approximately 45 members and guests were in attendance. The next regular meeting will be held the week of April 26th, 2010, unless otherwise scheduled to accommodate a guest speaker.

- **Minutes** – approved electronically prior to the meeting

- **Guests**

- Eric Watnik, American Deputy Chief of Mission
- Anita Schutz, CMI Business Department Chair
- Ken Woodbury, CMI President
- Bart Deemer, USAID
- Mike Case, IOM

- **Chamber President's opening remarks**

Welcome to the March Chamber of Commerce meeting. Please join me in welcoming Ken Woodbury, President of College of the Marshall Islands.

- **Ken Woodbury remarks**

I was active in Chambers of Commerce in Harrisburg and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. I'm happy to be here today.

At present, CMI is the nation's college. It is autonomous, and it is responsible for coordinating all private and public education in the Republic. There are 1,178 students that include 202 GED, 60 Upward Bound, and 50 ABC construction boot camp students. 65% of these students are fulltime. 38% of the students are studying Liberal Arts; 25% Business Administration; 21% Nursing; and 16% Elementary Education. There is a faculty of 40 with 100 other staff at our two campuses – Uliga and Arrak.

In the future we hope to offer Baccalaureate degrees initially in Education and Nursing. We see the potential for a total of 1,500 students of which 500 would include the other categories previously mentioned. There could be 100 students in our Arrak ABC construction boot camp program. We also hope to reactivate our Ebeye campus and use the new underwater fiber optic cable to offer distance learning.

Our 25 million dollar campus master plan is nearly complete. The reverse osmosis machines will supply all fresh water needs, and we will make some of that available to the nearby community. Our tsunami shelters are nearly complete.

The CMI Foundation that is a US chartered endowment currently has approximately \$800,000 in assets. We expect to see it grow to one million dollars by yearend.

Come to CMI for your training needs!

- **Questions from the floor**

Q. Tell us more about the tsunami shelters.

A. Two of the new buildings will be the new shelters. CMI has resident dormitory students that need to be considered. The shelters will also be available to the nearby community.

Q. Are your nursing graduates registered nurses (RN)?

A. Our nursing graduates receive an Associate of Science degree. With this they qualify to sit for the RN exam. We graduated 14 degreed nurses last year.

Q. Should CMI do more for handicapped students?

A. Our new construction allows easier access for handicapped students. A former colleague from Harrisburg Community College where I was President will travel here to advise us how to provide more academic support for handicapped students.

Q. Tell us more about Marshallese studies.

A. The new library will have a Marshallese wing that will house archives such as Nuclear Claims material, Pacific material, and Micronesian material.

Q. What will happen to CMI beyond the current financial provisions of the Amended Compact of Free Association with the United States that will end in 2023?

A. There are other sources of competitive funding that are available to the Marshall Islands.

- **New business**

- Elder Davidson introduced himself and his wife. They are here in their capacity as the Mormon Church's humanitarian projects coordinators.

- Tim Owens introduced Anita Schutz, CMI Business Department Chair.

- Anita Schutz introduced the group of CMI beginning Business students that are attending the Chamber meeting as a part of their studies.

- Eric Watnik announced that there will be an American Town Hall meeting on April 9th, 4:00 PM, at CMI.

- It appears that the Australian Company that supports the hyperbaric chamber that recently became available at the hospital will charge \$500 per hour for non-resident use where part of that fee will be shared with the Ministry of Health. Some Chamber members questioned the appropriateness of this given the fact that MIVA contributed to the acquisition of the hyperbaric chamber.

- The Marshall Islands Resort will have an Easter Sunday brunch this week.

- Eric Watnik introduced Bart Deemer.

- **Bart Deemer remarks**

I first arrived in Majuro about a year and a half ago.

Last year there were 80 disasters around the world to which USAID responded.

The transition from FEMA to USAID for the Marshall Islands included recognition of the need for a fulltime presence in Majuro. I am that person. My office is at the US Embassy, and I report to the Deputy Chief of Mission. USAID contracted out implementation partnership services to International Organization for Migration (IOM) that is headquartered in Manila. Mike Case is their local representative. I am responsible for the RMI and the FSM.

We prefer to buy locally as opposed to importing what is needed. USAID is very interested in building relationships with the business community.

We work closely with the Chief Secretary and the National Emergency Management Committee that reports to him. This committee would recommend that a disaster be declared. The Cabinet would consider that recommendation and advise the President. The President would declare a disaster. Once such a declaration is made then USAID can begin its work.

USAID currently focuses on response and reconstruction. There is no budget for large scale mitigation projects. However, there is a small opportunity to work with outer islands with things like water catchments.

NOAH provides weather warnings to the US Embassy which in turn advises USAID and the Chief Secretary. The Chief Secretary is responsible for issuing public alerts.

IOM rents warehouse space at the Uliga dock. Efforts are underway to stockpile certain types of items that would be needed in the event of a disaster. By storing those items on island there would be a quicker response to any need.

Background provided by USAID:

In 2004, legislation was passed to amend Article X of the Compact stipulating that as of November 4, 2008, responsibility for disaster response and reconstruction would be transferred from FEMA to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). USAID/OFDA has the responsibility to provide foreign disaster assistance and to coordinate the response of the U.S. Government (USG) to disasters abroad. OFDA's mandate is to save lives, alleviate suffering, and reduce the economic impact of disasters. OFDA does this by:

- Providing rapid, appropriate response to requests for assistance;
- Strengthening capacity of local, national, regional, and international entities on early warning practices that mitigate against natural hazards;
- Fostering self-sufficiency among disaster-prone nations by helping achieve some measure of preparedness; and
- Enhancing recovery from disasters through rehabilitation programs.

The compact as amended, defines the establishment of a Disaster Assistance Emergency Fund (DAEF) and the process for the RMI to request USG disaster assistance as follows:

- RMI Presidential Declaration as described in law
- Deemed beyond ability of RMI Government even with DAEF
- Request made to UN
- Mission Concurrence: Up to \$50K Ambassador's fund
- Preliminary Disaster Assessment (PDA) – FEMA and USAID and Government RMI within 10 days
- If US Presidential Declaration of Disaster: Disaster Relief Fund is available
- Reconstruction Plan developed within 60 days of the event

USAID continues coordination closely with FEMA and the two agencies recognize the need for a rigorous disaster preparedness and response mechanism for the RMI. Research shows that in the Federated States of Micronesia and RMI there have been:

- 32 declared disasters since 1963
- 22 Typhoons, 3 tropical storms, 3 waves, 2 fires and 2 droughts
- \$130 million of assistance since 1990
- 70% in Micronesia and over 80% of those were in Chuuk and Yap

Meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.

Minutes prepared by:

Jim McLean