

Marshall Islands Chamber of Commerce
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Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

Marshall Islands Resort

Meeting called to order by Vice President Mike Slinger at 12:15 P.M. Approximately 25 members and guests were in attendance. The next regular meeting will be held the week of October 18th, 2010, unless otherwise scheduled to accommodate a guest speaker.

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

- Martha Campbell, American Ambassador

- **Chamber Vice President's opening remarks**

Welcome to the September Chamber of Commerce meeting. We don't have a guest speaker today. This will be a general meeting.

We would like to thank the US Embassy for assisting in the preparation and submission of a Chamber request for a small US grant to provide educational business simulation game access to the high schools to encourage greater student business literacy. [Secretary's note: the grant request has been approved and will be signed by the Chamber at 10:30 AM tomorrow]

The General Manager of PII is presented with a framed certificate of merit for providing an apparently necessary competition that resulted in a dramatic lowering of fuel costs.

The Chamber needs "new blood" to select and schedule monthly meeting programs – volunteers? Chamber members and guests suggested the following topics: a) US Embassy Representative discuss consular issues as they may affect visas, passports, and other topics of interest; b) Minister of Finance answer questions about the budget and recommendations made by the several tax and cost reduction commissions; and c) Speaker and Attorney General discuss law enforcement and business development.

We would like to congratulate Bank of the Marshall Islands for 28 years of financial service to the community.

Do we have any interest in participating more in South Pacific Forum and related business activities to include the International Labor Organization (ILO)? Who wants to attend these? We need a standing group of interested parties to whom we can forward announcements. There have been at least three fully funded activities this summer that we did not attend. Don Hess and Roger Cooper volunteered.

Should we encourage the introduction of a bill to remove monopoly protection for state owned enterprises to encourage private sector development?

- **General Discussion**

The Chamber members vigorously discussed the Chamber's role as an effective business lobby and the degree of success or lack thereof that it has experienced in the last year or two. The following appear to be the general points of agreement among members:

The primary issue facing the country today is the lack of available jobs. More jobs will provide more revenue such as what is required to mitigate the current MISSA shortfall.

The money in circulation appears to be stagnant or decreasing thus providing an effective roadblock to further business development. This could be improved with the attraction of quality offshore investors. Barriers to attracting offshore investment exist such as the present land tenure system and the lack of a consistently functional national airline.

The laws do not appear to be effectively enforced to curtail tax cheating and other activities that drain available capital.

There doesn't appear to be either a voter or elected leader will to change the present status quo that would otherwise facilitate business development and the creation of new jobs.

The Chamber should prepare a position paper that articulates the basic business principals to which all members subscribe.

The Chamber should focus on one problem at a time and marshal all of its energy and resources toward an effective solution to that problem.

The most egregious problem currently facing the country is the national airline that needs to be privatized or outsourced.

The Speaker and the Attorney General will be invited to attend the October Chamber meeting to discuss these and other business development issues.

- **New business**

There will be a Kwajalein Trade Fair on November first. Contact the Ministry of Resources and Development if you are interested in selling products or services at this event.

The Marshall Islands doesn't have a priority list with the necessary supporting documentation that would allow available Japanese funding to proceed. Japanese representatives are expected to arrive in October or November to discuss this.

It is likely that with the United merger that the President of Continental Air Micronesia will be reassigned to a stateside position. Chamber members expressed their appreciation for the extent to which Mr. Duncan has innovated new routes and pricing plans. The Secretary will write a letter to express this sentiment.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.

Minutes prepared by:

Jim McLean