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Good Company

Economic Strategic Commission – Advancing Entrepreneurship in New Hampshire

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During the 2011 legislative session, Senate Bill 92 (SB 92) was adopted establishing a statutory commission to “review the relationship between business and government.” This description understates the purpose and intent of SB 92 and the duties and aspirations of the Economic Strategic Commission. This commission has been enlisted to examine existing statutes, regulations and governmental impediments for the purpose of identifying opportunities and making recommendations to enhance the state’s business environment, to facilitate modern and efficient interactions with agencies, and to restore the “New Hampshire advantage” with the goals of fostering economic development, productive jobs, fiscal stability, and a prosperous quality of life for the state’s business community and citizens.

Fundamentally, the aim of the Commission is to make New Hampshire a magnet for entrepreneurs and the business community through (i) simplified, supported and productive interactions with government agencies, (ii) enhanced protection of proprietary rights and competitive positioning for start-ups and business operations generally, and (iii) the establishment of streamlined, cost-effective and fair resolution protocols in connection with agency disputes. Through attracting and retaining solid and competitive businesses, the economic base of New Hampshire will be enriched with job creation, a broader tax base will be created to mollify state revenue needs and fluctuations, and opportunities for individual prosperity and wealth creation will be garnered.

While the efforts of the Commission have just commenced, one of the pillars of improved business-government relations promoted by SB 92 is well advanced. Principally through the examination and efforts of the Department of Information Technology, a “one-stop” Internet portal for business is in development. This effort to increase access and transparency, and minimize redundancy, has included evaluating the number of different business identifiers and thousands of forms required by state regulators. It is anticipated that by the 4 quarter of this year, a preliminary phase of “NH Business One-Stop” will be launched whereby businesses can access and complete all required state forms with cross-population of information to the extent feasible. While changes to current methods of filing forms and associated payments will not be included in this initial phase, these enhancements remain on DoIT’s agenda. Technology and modernization of systems will certainly facilitate significant improvement to the business-government relationship, but as several members of the Commission have noted, NH is small enough that access to the “personal touch” needs to be retained.



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Other issues already highlighted for the Commission to consider are state-wide technology and transportation infrastructure, work force training needs and programs, business support and assistance resources, access to capital to foster growth, and promotion of New Hampshire to both attract new business and to retain existing business.

The Economic Strategic Commission is chaired by Eric Herr, a businessman rich with experience in the software, technology, media, finance and consulting industries, including with NH's Autodesk, Inc. Senator Andy Sanborn, prime sponsor of SB 92 and successful local entrepreneur, serves as the Commission's Vice Chair. The remaining twenty members of the Commission include elected officials, commissioners of state agencies, members of the New Hampshire business community and New Hampshire business lawyers. The Commission will be meeting at least monthly; subcommittees will meet more frequently to address specific topics; and interim and final reports from the Commission are due the latter half of this year. The composition of the Commission, its schedule of meetings, and additional detail regarding the Commission can be found at: [www.gencourt.state.nh/Economic Strategic Commission](http://www.gencourt.state.nh/Economic%20Strategic%20Commission).

The Commission is receptive to additional input from the business community. Meetings of the Commission are open. The author of this article, a member of the Commission appointed by the Governor, welcomes insights from the business community with regard to positive and negative interactions with our state agencies, other observed shortcomings of New Hampshire in comparison to other states, and opportunities to foster improved business conditions in the state and to restore the New Hampshire Advantage.