

Thank you Lt. Governor Scott for coming to Franklin County and listening to our concerns.

Thank you David and the Chamber for scheduling this brainstorming session. I'm sorry I'm not there today but my youngest daughter, who is a senior at BFA, has a ski race that I'm attending. I only have a few meets left before she concludes her high school ski racing.

Here are my five minutes of ranting and suggestions that I think would be very helpful for small business and economic growth in the Franklin County area.

1.) To start, Lt. Gov. Scott should have run for Governor (as I believe he would have been victorious). I know this is beating a dead horse, but this would have sparked confidence in the business community and would have created consumer confidence. I hope Lt. Gov. Scott will seriously consider running for governor in 2016.

2.) The legislative representation we have for Franklin County is probably the best group we have had in a long time. The people representing us have a good handle on fiscal responsibility, helping small business survive, and balancing environment and economic growth.

Having an office in Lamoille County, I see a very different outlook with some of the legislative representation. I attended a legislative meeting last year where the Speaker of the House was asked when the legislature was going to stop with four to five percent budget increases that has totaled, in the last four years, over a 21% increase with an approximate 4.3%

increase for 2014. The Speaker replied that he was proud of the budget increase and called it minimal. Obviously, the Speaker does not have the mathematical ability to figure out that this continued rate of increase will double the budget in a short period of time with these so called “minimal increases”. This trend has to stop or our legislature is going to bankrupt the state and continue to drive business out and deter business from coming to Vermont.

3.) I truly feel that State government needs to be reduced. For example, The Agency of Transportation and Agency of Natural Resources has gotten so big and so bureaucratic with all the various divisions within them, that it takes a ridiculous amount of time to get answers, confirmation and permits. There are divisions within these agencies that should be either eliminated or privatized, which in most cases, would be performed by the private sector more efficiently and more cost effectively.

4.) It would be beneficial if the State helped the Town of St. Albans maneuver through the permitting process to obtain the necessary approvals to construct the 207 extension loop road in the north end growth center to create economic opportunities and to help alleviate future traffic congestion on US route 7 and VT route 207. The State wetlands office has done nothing to help the town in maneuvering through this process and has only created road blocks and delays. The Town could use the help of area legislators and Lt. Governor Scott to help with this process.

5.) Economic growth in St. Albans and Franklin County would be achieved if there was an end to the sewer and water moratorium between the City and Town. The state should be stepping in and forcing a settlement between the St. Albans City and St. Albans Town regarding sewer and water allocations. I see on a regular basis a significant amount of new business potentially settling in the greater St. Albans area. Those businesses leave for other communities and or other states once they find out the City will not provide sewer and water to the Town which is needed for their business. The moratorium on the Town has lasted way too long, to the point where people have filed bankruptcy and banks have foreclosed on lands because they were unable to secure water and sewer allocations. It has stopped economic development in the area and it needs to be resolved now. The City has provided a proposal recently that is one sided and unfair that adds significant costs and additional zoning review to determine if the project will have a competing aspect to future businesses or existing business in the City. I would suggest the powers to be at the State force the city and town to sit down and come up with a fair and equitable agreement that would jump start economic development in St. Albans and the surrounding area. It is very upsetting how one community can hold up another community's economic prosperity by denying the use of essential services. The St. Albans area could really use the help of our area legislators and Lt. Governor Scotts in getting this settlement done.

6.) Repeal the new Act 250 criterion 9L. This has become a permitting nightmare that District Coordinators and District Commissions have a wide range of opinion on how the new law is to be interpreted and administered. This new criterion has already derailed proposed projects and created economic hardships for the applicants (to the point where the applicants are being challenged by Vermont Natural Resource Council (VNRC) and the Agency of Natural Resources threatening to appeal their proposal). With no clear positive outcome and the likelihood of spending thousands of dollars, the applicants are forced to withdraw applications and give up their dreams. Some District Coordinators have determined that some existing approved industrial parks are subject to this intensive review under this new criterion. This criterion will have a wide spread effect on businesses growing and moving into this state. The State Chamber of Commerce, led by Michael Zahner, is working very hard in trying to have the legislature amend this criterion so that it gives the applicant a clear permitting path to follow. Again, we need our legislators help to ensure this law is rewritten in a more predictable, economical and clear direct path or repeal criterion 9L completely.

7.) As a small business owner I am still waiting to see how healthcare is going to affect my business. It is near impossible to budget with unknown costs associated with healthcare. The legislature has to stop attacking small business payroll to fund these different pie in the sky ideas. The proposed 0.7% payroll tax increase equates to approximately \$4,000.00 increase for me. This tax increase would take away from my employees potential pay raises, bonuses, and will significantly reduce my charitable contributions.

8.) Paid sick leave. As a small business I provide one week of paid/personal sick leave (after a 6 month employment trial period) Sick time accrues at 0.42 days/month or a total of 5 days. The latest proposal that is being considered by the legislator is 7 days to be accrued at 1 hour for every 30 hours work which starts immediately upon hiring. No trial period. If this bill is passed, I will be forced (as many other small business will have to do) to reevaluate paid holidays and vacation time and make the necessary adjustments, which will be likely taking away paid holidays.

I think I have strained David's eyes long enough. But in closing, the legislator needs to understand that economic development and small businesses are the engines that keep this State alive and the pot of money small business has to operate is not bottomless.

Thank you