|  |
| --- |
| **NEW HAMPSHIRE – IRELAND TRADE COUNCIL**Department of Business and Economic Affairs100 North Main Street, Suite 100Concord, NH 03301 |
| **State Senators**Hon. Regina BirdsellHon. Sharon Carson**State Representatives**Hon. Dennis MalloyHon. Sherman Packard**Secretary of State**Hon. Steve Shurtleff**Dept. of Business and Economic Affairs**Taylor CaswellJeanie Forrester**Business and Industry Association of New Hampshire**Mike Skelton**University System of New Hampshire**Michele Dillon**Public Members**Michael Barrett*Granite State District**Export Council*Justin Oslowski*U.S. Commercial**Service*Andrea Hechavarria*NH Life Sciences**Association*Darragh Madden*Irish Electric* | **APPROVED Meeting Minutes**Department of Business and Economic AffairsKinsman Conference RoomFriday, January 17, 20251:30 PMThe meeting was called to order at 1:37 p.m. by Chair Sharon Carson.Present: Chair Sen. Carson, Sen. Birdsell, Rep. Malloy, Rep. Shurtleff, Commissioner Caswell, Jeanie Forrester, Michele Dillon, Andrea Hechavarria, Darragh Madden. Guest: Consul General of Boston Sighle FitzGeraldBrief introductions of Council Members and guests.A motion by Sen. Birdsell, seconded by Rep. Shurtleff to approve the minutes of October 23, 2024 as written. Unanimous vote.Consul General Sighle FitzGerald provided an overview of the role of the Consulate and how it can support the NH-Ireland Trade Council in their efforts to strengthen and build on the relationship; she noted that we just celebrated 100 years of a relationship with the United States.She appreciated that the Council is serious about the relationship, especially since NH has the highest population of those who claim Irish heritage at 20%, surpassing even Massachusetts.Areas of linkage include tourism, advanced manufacturing, and higher education – all of which have so much potential to develop and increase connections. As the 7th largest trading partner, Ireland supports 100,000 jobs in the U.S. There is strong foreign direct investment, with a skilled workforce and strong return on investment. The sale of Irish whiskey is rising exponentially, 22%.She encouraged my cultural activities in New Hampshire and spoke about the NH Liquor Commission’s collaboration with whiskey tasting and food promotional events.She noted that the U.S. has had a tremendous impact on the peace process in Ireland, commenting that Ireland is where they are today thanks to the recognition as an independent country a century ago; Irish come to the U.S. today as a matter of choice instead of necessity.There was discussion about visits to New Hampshire from Irish diplomats, unlikely this year that Prime Minister would be able to visit, but possibly a senior ranking cabinet minister as traditionally, 8 or 9 ministers visit the U.S. as part of St. Patrick’s Day celebrations. Need to plan activities for this visit to include business visits and the academic community. How do we engage the Irish community, possibly through a reception, as Consul General FitzGerald noted that the Council can help to find a focal point for this community.Discussion about the historic nature of Derry and Londonderry (Sen. Birdsell and Sen. Carson representing these communities respectively), citing the First Congregational Church and Cemetery; cultural organizations like AOH in Manchester where Rep. Shurtleff is quite active;Darragh Madden noted Gaelic football in Merrimack, started by the National Guard and played military in Ireland.Lots of ideas including promotion at the Manchester Airport, high school exchanges with sister cities, Irish film/art; Research Ireland is giving out grants to science and technology projects and is attached to the Consulate, role is to travel around New England and focus on 3d level collaboration (we will ask Research Ireland representative to come to a meeting in six months); working holiday program, Work Free Ireland, allows one to go over there and work for a year and then come back; Studio One in Derry; world class film studio, only curved screen in the east coast.Andrea Hechavarria noted there will be bio-tech event in mid-June, and that the Council could look at planning an evening event specifically for visiting Irish life sciences companies.Brief discussion about building an event around St. Patrick’s Day in 2026 focusing on cultural heritage. Irish film/art, whiskey, food (but moving “beyond just corned beef and cabbage”), etc.Governor Ayotte joined the meeting for photographs at 2:16; the Governor noted that she is looking forward to working with the Council and BEA on opportunities and highlighted her Irish heritage.Rep. Malloy noted there is a legislative conference in Ireland in August (the American Irish Legislative Conference), with Commissioner Caswell noting that with enough lead time that BEA could help set up additional meetings.Next meeting will be February 14th at 1:30.Motion to adjourn at 2:45 p.m. by Sen. Birdsell, seconded by Darragh Madden. |