



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**16-5676

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**Agenda Item Number:** 2.

**Agenda Date:** 11/1/2016

**In Control:** Economic and Human Development Committee

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**DEPARTMENT:** Economic Development

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Rene Dominguez

**COUNCIL DISTRICT IMPACTED:** City-Wide

**SUBJECT:** Café Commerce Update and Board Appointments

### **SUMMARY:**

An update on the services offered and outcomes achieved through Café Commerce, as well as the appointment of Melissa Aguillon, President and CEO of Aguillon & Associates LLC, to the Café Commerce Advisory Board.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

In 2012, a taskforce of business owners and advocacy organizations were convened to brainstorm methods and strategies for promoting small and new business growth in San Antonio. Business participants represented a wide array of industries, including retail, food and dining, engineering, technology, public relations, trade services, and private investors. Business advocacy organizations included various chambers of commerce, such as the San Antonio Greater Chamber and San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), LiftFund, the Westside Development Corporation (WDC), and San Antonio for Growth on the Eastside (SAGE).

The taskforce identified the need to establish a culture of entrepreneurship throughout the San Antonio community and increase coaching and mentoring opportunities for future and existing small business owners. The value of existing resources was also highlighted during the taskforce discussions, as well as the need for increased marketing of these resources. The development of Café Commerce was recommended as a mechanism by which to implement these types of programs. The taskforce further recommended the outsourcing of operations and management of Café Commerce to promote an organic and innovation-focused approach to service delivery. Thus, the City sought to identify a partner to further develop, implement and manage Café Commerce.

In November 2013, City Council approved a professional services agreement with ACCION Texas, now LiftFund, for the operation and management of Café Commerce, which includes both a virtual and physical location where entrepreneurs gather, collaborate, and learn more about entrepreneurship and small business

resources. To provide the physical location, 10,000 square feet were remodeled on the first floor of the San Antonio Central Library.

## ISSUE:

Since Café Commerce was officially opened to the public in June 2014, the entrepreneur and small business resource center has engaged in various programming and partnerships with community business resource partners to establish a culture of entrepreneurship and help small businesses grow. The over 80 community business partners consist of chambers of commerce, universities, Geekdom, San Antonio Economic Development Foundation, and TechBoc to name a few and programming at Café Commerce currently consists of the following seven programs:

- Break Fast and Launch is a culinary business accelerator that increases the sustainability of new restaurants, food trucks, bars, and related culinary ventures;
- Venture Challenge SA challenges entrepreneurs to create and achieve personalized business milestones to further develop the entrepreneur's team, product, and company;
- 1 Million Cups and Pitch Tab are similar programs that allow local entrepreneurs an opportunity to present their business ideas to a diverse audience of fellow entrepreneurs;
- EchoStarter is designed for middle school aged children to learn social entrepreneurship principles and how solving world problems can also create business opportunity;
- Phase I Incubator offers entrepreneurs and small businesses office space and training with the goal of speeding up growth and success of a business; and
- Entrepreneurship Week SA highlights the entrepreneurs and businesses that are creating positive changes in the community.

In addition to the implementation and management of programming and collaboration with community business partners, Café Commerce began a rebranding initiative in 2015 as the name does not convey and emphasize the benefits of the resource center to entrepreneurs and small businesses. During the exploration of the rebrand initiative process, entrepreneurs and small business owners, even youth, were unaware of the services provided by Café Commerce and commented it was one of the best kept secrets in San Antonio and should have a name that reflects its commitment to being a resource and leader in the entrepreneur space. As a result, it has been determined that this rebrand initiative that will be unveiled on November 18, 2016 will create a new identify for the resource center which will have a broader reach to entrepreneurs and small business owners who are unaware of the services provided.

Last, section 3.3 of the Café Commerce agreement requires the establishment of an advisory board to provide guidance regarding the strategic vision for Café Commerce, as well as feedback on building community involvement, delivering relevant programming and services, and strengthening the impact of Café Commerce on the community. The Café Commerce Advisory Board shall be appointed by LiftFund in consultation with the City Council Economic and Human Development Committee (EHDC). On November 2013, EHDC supported the establishment of the five-member Café Commerce Advisory Board, of whom three were recommended by the City. Due to the vacancy on the Café Commerce Advisory Board, the Mayor has appointed Melissa Aguillon, President and CEO of Aguillon & Associates LLC, to fill the vacancy on the Café Commerce Advisory Board.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

While the update on the services offered and outcomes achieved through Café Commerce serve as a briefing, staff and LiftFund recommends Melissa Aguillon, President and CEO of Aguillon & Associates LLC, to fill a vacancy on the Café Commerce Advisory Board in consultation with the City Council Economic and Human Development Committee. No action is necessary.