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MassEcon names Abair as new executive director

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Watertown, MA The board of directors of MassEcon has selected Peter Abair as its new executive director to lead the nonprofit organization in promoting the location and expansion of businesses in the Commonwealth beginning on January 1.

Abair, currently executive director of the Massachusetts Biotechnology Education Foundation (MassBioEd) in Cambridge and a veteran of economic development initiatives in Massachusetts for over two decades, on Nov. 5 will begin working with executive director Susan Houston, who has led MassEcon's work since its creation 25 years ago and who will leave the organization at the first of the new year.

"I am thrilled with the appointment of Peter Abair as the incoming executive director of MassEcon," said Stephen Flavin, vice president for Academic and Corporate Engagement at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and chairman of the board of directors at MassEcon. "He possesses a great blend of experience and leadership in contributing to economic development across the Commonwealth. I've had the pleasure of working with Peter in his previous roles at MassBio and MassBioEd, and am confident of his ability to build upon the strong foundation built by Susan Houston."

Abair previously served as director of economic development and global affairs for the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council (MassBio); principal of Berkshire Atlantic Group Consulting; director of the Massachusetts Office of Business Development; director of the Massachusetts Department of Economic Development; and associate director of the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development.

Before holding those roles related to economic development, Abair was director of the office of the governor for Western Massachusetts and director of Public Affairs for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education. He served as a legislative aide to Massachusetts State Sen. Lucile Hicks and to U.S. Rep. Silvio Conte.

"Over my 20 years in economic development in Massachusetts, MassEcon has always been a great partner," said Abair. "MassEcon plays a very vital role in Massachusetts economic development as a trusted partner for the State. In working with businesses considering location to or expansion in Massachusetts, MassEcon brings the expertise and insight that effectively paints the picture supporting the Massachusetts option."

“I couldn’t be more excited about taking on a leadership role there,” Abair said. “Susan has provided me and the whole team at MassEcon an incredible foundation upon which to build. It’s a great opportunity for us to ask, ‘Where can we go from here and how we can pursue our mission of growing economic opportunity in Massachusetts even better?’.”

The year 2018 marks MassEcon’s 25th anniversary. Founded in 1993 by a consortium of utility companies led by then-Boston Edison, and embraced by the Weld administration, MassEcon was the first private-public partnership to promote Massachusetts as an exceptional place to do business. Over its 25-year history, MassEcon has facilitated the location of 275 companies, associated with 30,000 jobs, as they expanded or relocated to Massachusetts.

“I’m delighted to be passing the baton to Pete Abair,” said Houston, who will work with Abair as Executive Director-Elect in a two-month transition period leading up to Jan. 1. “Pete brings the perfect blend of experience and energy to the task. He respects what we’ve built and will put his unique talents to work in taking MassEcon to the next level.”

Abair’s experience reflects his accomplishments in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors as a leader of organizations, economic developer, strategic director, fundraiser, communicator, and team builder. He has been involved in economic development, business recruitment, project management, budgeting, communications, and policy, research and analysis.

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