



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, September 13, 2023, 11:30AM – 1:00PM**  
**Richmond Room, 450 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, California**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Call to Order: 11:56 AM by Chair, A. Anderson

**2. Roll Call & Check In**

A quorum was present with the following commission members:

**Present:** A. Anderson (Chair), A. Huie, K. Lynch, J. Lee, A. Portillo-Knowles, G. Sewell-Murphy, E.

Thompson, D. Wear, O. Willis, R. Yazdi

**Absent:** D. Heiss, C. Kenney

**Council Liaison:** Cesar Zepeda

**3. Approval of Minutes**

July 2023 Meeting Minutes with additional comments/amendments:

1st – J. Lee, 2nd – A. Portillo-Knowles

**4. Report from EDC Chair**

**5. Old and/or New Business**

**a. 2023 Taste of Richmond Update – Commissioner Portillo Knowles**

Commissioner Portillo-Knowles provided a comprehensive update on the 4th Annual Taste of Richmond event held in July 2023. A budget report was presented to the commission, highlighting the financial aspects of the event.

Commissioner Portillo-Knowles mentioned that this marked the fourth occurrence of the Taste of Richmond event. Notably, two pledges remain outstanding, and there are some uncleared checks. All items marked as "green" on the budget have been successfully resolved. Commissioner Portillo-Knowles emphasized the advantageous location of City Hall, which offered accessibility, community orientation, affordability, and value for the event.

The event played a significant role in supporting local small businesses, with 376 tickets sold. Notably, ticket sales continued until just 30 minutes before the event's conclusion. Numerous businesses expressed their enthusiasm, as it was their first centrally located event in Richmond, and they eagerly anticipate future editions.

Chair Anderson inquired about the availability of shirts and merchandise post-event. Commissioner Portillo-Knowles confirmed that all event merchandise had been distributed to attendees, and there was a positive response to the live music.

It was noted that attendees from outside Richmond also participated in the event, with Commissioner Portillo-Knowles mentioning a friend from Dixon attending and Commissioner Sewell-Murphy's daughter from Chino Hills in Southern California also joining the event. Commissioner James raised questions regarding the budget and expressed an intention to connect with Commissioner Portillo-Knowles for further discussion. Commissioner Sewell-Murphy inquired about the event's scheduled date for next year. Commissioner Portillo-Knowles reported that Shane Johnson has already requested the Civic Center Plaza for July 2024.

Commissioner Yazdi sought clarification on the selection and representation of businesses at the event. Commissioner Portillo-Knowles confirmed that all businesses were invited, resulting in a total of 12 food businesses participating.

Additionally, videos and photos were professionally captured during the event, with the Economic Development staff set to obtain these materials.

Commissioner Reza Yazdi inquired about sponsorship and donations. Commissioner Portillo-Knowles explained that businesses were approached for sponsorship, noting that many expressed a willingness to support the event but may encounter budgetary constraints or insufficient funds remaining in their fiscal year.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy asked about the spotlighting or nomination of businesses.

Commissioner Portillo-Knowles confirmed that all participating businesses were spotlighted and recognized during the event.

The Commission engaged in a discussion regarding providing grants or stimulus to businesses outside the event. Commissioner Willis proposed an alternative approach, which involved granting businesses an opportunity to conduct free product giveaways as a means of support.

**b. Rethinking Mission Statement/Mentorship Program – Commission Wear**

Commissioner Wear initiated a discussion regarding her proposal for reconsidering the Commission's mission statement and the development of a mentorship program. She reported that the proposal had been submitted to the City Clerk and the Economic Development Staff for their review.

Currently, the Commission consists of only a few members, despite having five subcommittees. She pointed out that within the calendar year, commissioners are allowed to miss up to three monthly meetings, and two months are designated as recess periods.

The primary purpose of the Economic Development Commission (EDC) is to recommend long-term economic development goals to the City Council and City officials, concerning the overall economic development of the city. Commissioner Wear, who is part of the Community Engagement subcommittee, mentioned that the subcommittee structure has undergone several changes over time. She proposed an exercise for commissioners to collaboratively discuss the mission and structure of the Commission.

Commissioner Wear also introduced her proposal for a mentorship program, highlighting the challenges faced by new members in becoming actively involved in the EDC beyond the monthly meetings. She cited her conversation with Commissioner Thompson, in which she inquired about his goals and motivations for joining the EDC.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy recalled a previous discussion about the EDC's role in providing long-term economic development plans.

Chair Anderson emphasized how the Commission has evolved over the years, including the inclusion of council and mayor representatives in meetings. He highlighted that the EDC primarily serves in an advisory capacity and does not possess the same powers as other commissions, such as the Planning Commission. Chair Anderson recommended conducting a survey to gauge how commissioners envision the Commission and its role within the city.

Commissioner Wear distributed a flyer for the GRIP Harmony Walk and noted that event organizers had inquired whether the EDC would like to have a table at the event. The Commission collectively recognized the significance of community engagement in relation to economic development.

Commissioner Yazdi expressed support for Commissioner Wear's proposal and underscored the existing disconnect with City Hall. He suggested adding a working session to the agenda to address these matters.

The next step in the process is to schedule a workshop on the agenda for the future.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy also shared her concerns about past issues with staff and politics, mentioning that she experiences anxiety before meetings, fearing that her statements might be excluded from the minutes. She relayed an incident involving a member who had transitioned from the Economic Development Commission to the Planning Commission due to conflicts with staff.

**c. EDC Vice Chair Nominations**

City staff provided paper ballots for nominations to the EDC commission to fill and turn it at the end of the meeting. Selection will be set on the agenda for the next regular meeting of the EDC.

## **6. Standing Committee Reports**

### **a. Sustainability: Businesses/Industrial Hemp & Expo/Assessment**

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy asked about the status of the Expo survey. Staff discussed that the electronic survey was sent out the commission for the review. The EDC Commission members stated that they reviewed the survey and that it was okay for distribution. There were no comments for changes for the survey. The timeline for the opening and closing of the survey is for a month. City staff will be distributing the survey via email lists and providing the survey for EDC to distribute as well.

### **b. Policy Green/Blue New Deal**

Commissioner Willis provided an update. Brandon has stepped down and the subcommittee is composed of Chair Anderson and Commissioner Willis. Open invite extended to commission to join. Roots of Success has received a grant from the City of Richmond and will be providing 20 RYSE participants with environment literacy training which aligns with the Green-Blue New Deal. Justine Burt sent an update to the subcommittee about submitting reports to Environmental Manager, Samantha Carr on the Green-Blue New Deal. Governor Newsom put out an executive order two weeks ago about job training, green training, displacement of jobs due to the oil industry. Chair Anderson stated how they requested Justine to provide us examples of cities within California and Southern California that are also implementing a Green-Blue new deal or something similar.

### **c. Community Engagement**

Commissioner Wear had no update.

### **d. Taste of Richmond**

Update was provided during Old/New Business.

### **e. Cannabis**

Commissioner Lynch discussed waiting for updates on consultant selection. Staff liaison, Lizeht Zepeda, discussed that the consultant selected contract will be going to City Council, September 19th, 2023. Lizeht also discussed that they are working on an extension with the CA Go-BIZ. Commissioner Lynch requested ED staff to provide updates on anything Cannabis related and that they are having a meeting with the Mayor of Richmond. This was prompted due to new developments at Power Plant Park and public hearings happening.

**Report from City Council:** No report provided.

## **Staff Reports**

**7. Public Comments/Announcements/Handouts**

No public comments received.

**8. Next Meeting:** November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023; 11:30 AM

**9. Adjournment:** 1:06 PM; 1<sup>st</sup> – R. Yazdi, 2<sup>nd</sup> – K. Lynch