



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

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

Call to Order: 11:38 AM by Vice Chair, A. Portillo-Knowles

**2. Roll Call & Check In**

A quorum was present with the following commission members:

**Present:** J. Lee, A. Portillo-Knowles, G. Sewell-Murphy, D. Thompson, D. Wear, O. Willis, C. Kenney, R.

Yazdi

**Absent:** A. Huie, D. Heiss, K. Lynch, C. Jackson

**Council Liaison:** Cesar Zepeda

**3. Approval of Minutes**

November Meeting Minutes with additional comments/amendments:

1st – D. Wear, 2nd – O. Willis

**4. Report from EDC Chair**

Vice Chair Portillo-Knowles provided a report. She mentioned that once the chair is solidified, she will meet with the chair to discuss the overall direction of the EDC for 2024 and 2025. Both short-term and long-term goals will be discussed and bring back to the entire EDC for discussion. She also mentioned having EDC commissioners attending City Council meetings.

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

a. **EDC Chair Nominations**

City staff, Lizeht Zepeda and Kyle Lam, helped facilitate the EDC Chair Nomination process.

Commissioner Wear prepared and provided a statement for the Chair Position. Three commissioners were nominated: Commissioner Gloria Sewell-Murphy, Commissioner Diana Wear, and Commissioner Lee.

b. **Chair Elections**

City staff, Lizeht Zepeda and Kyle Lam, facilitated the EDC Chair Election Process. The results were Commissioner Wear as being elected as Chair.

**6. Standing Committee Reports**

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

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy discussed the survey and asked City staff to provide the commission with the survey results and analysis for the Commission to review. Commissioner Sewell-Murphy mentioned that from the people she has talked to, a lot of people are not aware of sustainability and thus the Expo will need to be very informative and educational for the community and businesses.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy also asked if everyone received a copy of the image/flyer with information about the 50,000 uses, benefits, and versatility of industrial hemp. There is a industrial hemp bill before Congress to attempt to lift the restrictions on hemp in manufacturing and innovation. She discussed how China grew out of poverty by growing hemp and that hemp is reportedly the oldest domesticated plant.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy also discussed talking to the Vice-Mayor about the Expo including funding and using city facilities. Commissioner Sewell-Murphy asked about any discounts and funding for the Expo. City staff, Lizeht Zepeda, mentioned that she can connect Commissioner Sewell-Murphy to the recreation department as they manage City facilities. Commissioner Portillo-Knowles discussed that the fees are only waived if the event is City-sponsored. Commissioner Portillo-Knowles discussed that for the Taste of Richmond, the event used the restrooms of the Civic Auditorium.

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

Commissioner Willis provided an update. He had a call with Justine last week and she is working on the main report for the Green Blue New Deal, which should be completed in the next few weeks. Commissioner Willis also extended an open invite to commission to join the subcommittee. There have been master plan updates from the state of California Education Master Plan, which includes things such as priority funding for cities such as Richmond. There are updates from COP28 to phase out fossil fuels. Commissioner Portillo-Knowles asked if the commission could receive both pros and cons of new projects relating to the New Green Blue Deal to brief before meetings and discussions. Once the report is out, there is an opportunity for the city to be able to request staff and/or fellows as well.

**c. Community Engagement**

Commissioner Wear provided an update. She discussed meeting with Councilmember Zepeda about community engagement. Commissioner Wear will be working with Councilmember Zepeda to put together a survey for small businesses to find out what is working for businesses and what is

not working for businesses. She also stated that the Councilmember will be able to rejoin the EDC meetings in January as his schedule will be changing.

**d. Taste of Richmond**

Commissioner Portillo-Knowles provided an update. The date for the event is July 13, 2024.

Commissioner Jackson and Kenney are both joining the subcommittee. Some impacts to the event at the time would be the library that is currently under renovation. There is parking at the event. Transportation through the City's Transportation Department is also an option to be explored.

**e. Cannabis**

Commissioner Lynch was not present for updates. City staff, Lizeht Zepeda discussed that the Cannabis Ordinance is currently being amended. The current direction is to add one lottery retail license and three equity retail licenses.

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

**Staff Reports**

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

Cordell Hindler submitted the following comments:

1. The Economic Development Commission Is Invited to the Richmond Chamber Holiday Party on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 5:30 to 8:00 PM
2. Senior Winter Ball Hosted by the Richmond Commission On Aging December 16, 2023 6:00 to 10:00 PM Richmond Auditorium \$40.00 per Person
3. I Would Like to See the EDC Meetings to go Hybrid just Like How Berkeley does their Committee Meetings

The Commission discussed EDC meetings going hybrid. City staff will request the City Attorney Office to look into the possibility of hybrid meetings in accordance with the Brown Act and other related laws.

Commissioner Yazdi asked if the Commission ever received a presentation from Prologis about their developments like at Hilltop Mall. Commissioner Yazdi requested to have them on the calendar for 2024. Commissioner Wear discussed having a similar presentation in 2022. Commissioner Portillo-Knowles mentioned she can reach out to have them present in the upcoming year.

Commissioner Portillo-Knowles also mentioned that the EDC received a new email. Commissioner Wear asked about the possibility of business cards with the new emails.

Commissioner Kenney discussed and encouraged site visits to businesses in the upcoming year. She mentioned how she did the social media and content creation for the Taste of Richmond and visited numerous businesses who did not know what the EDC nor Taste of Richmond was. Commissioner Kenney also mentioned that the buzzwords for the next year is Connection, Community, and Wellness.

Commissioner Lee asked if the Taste of Richmond content, marketing materials, videos, photos could be reshared to the commission.

Commissioner Lee discussed that the Chamber is partnering with the Mayor's office to have Best of Richmond. They are hoping to have nominations in January and to have winners announced in March. Commissioner Lee also added a comment that he appreciated Councilmember Zepeda's comment on the Veola Wastewater situation. Councilmember Zepeda also discussed another issue when a company closed a street without notifying the City/Public Works.

Commissioner Portillo-Knowles asked about an update on ARPA funding and allocations in terms of businesses as ARPA is intended for economic recovery and development. Councilmember Zepeda mentioned that the council allocated over 2 million dollars for businesses. There is currently no structure for how to use the money. Some ideas include façade improvements, implementing ordinances such as the food ware ordinance, supporting business corridors, and more. The money needs to be spent by 2025. Commissioner Willis also mentioned that it would be very valuable to leverage ARPA funding in areas that will be identified in the upcoming report on the New Green Blue Deal.

Councilmember Zepeda mentioned how it would be great for the commission to be present quarterly to the Council.

Councilmember Zepeda also mentioned that the city is working on looking at a new type of Transportation option and a hospital coming to the City of Richmond. Other cities in Contra Costa County are exploring options such as autonomous vehicles.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy's birthday is on December 20<sup>th</sup>.

**8. Next Meeting:** January 10th, 2023; 11:30 AM

**9. Adjournment:** 12:55PM