



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 13, 2024, 11:30AM – 1:00PM

Richmond Room, 450 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, California

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Call to Order: 11:39 am by Chair Wear

2. Roll Call & Check In

A quorum was present with the following commission members:

Present: G. Sewell-Murphy, D. Thompson, C. Jackson, D. Wear, O. Willis, K. Lynch, J. Lee, A. Portillo-Knowles

Absent: A. Huie, R. Yazdi, C. Kenney

Council Liaison: Cesar Zepeda

3. Approval of Minutes

February Meeting Minutes

1st – O. Willis, 2nd – D. Thompson

Abstentions: J. Lee, G. Sewell-Murphy

The commission discussed the meeting minutes. It was noted that staff is currently recording minutes according to the agenda and Rosenberg's Rules of Order.

Commissioner Lee made a motion to include New Business as a standard agenda item for every meeting, ensuring all commissioners have the opportunity to address topics of their choice. Vice-Chair Portillo-Knowles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

4. Report from EDC Chair

- a. In honor of Women's History month, Chair Wear shared a quote from St. Frances Xavier Cabrini. A movie about St. Frances Xavier Cabrini is playing at Hilltop. Cabrini was an Italian immigrant who came to this country at the end of the 19th century. She witnessed disease, crime and impoverished children in New York and set up a courageous mission to advocate to the mayor to secure housing and health care for the most vulnerable. She used her entrepreneurial skills to build an empire of hope unlike anything the world had ever seen, and her prophetic words are still food today when she said, "The world is poisoned with erroneous theories, and needs to be taught sane doctrines, but it is difficult to straighten what has become crooked."
- b. Chair Wear reported on incorporating arts into economic development. There is currently a large amount of money poured into arts for Richmond that can enhance any economic Development endeavors that the commission supports. Last October 2023, through the grassroots efforts of artists and activists, the City Council passed the concept of an Arts Corridor in Richmond, designating Macdonald Avenue as the site. \$250,000 was allocated from American Rescue Plan Act Funding. Staff was instructed to solicit proposals and qualifications to establish an Arts District, which includes outreach to businesses, residents, and stakeholders.

5. Old and/or New Business

a. Standing Committee

Chair Wear opened the discussion by revisiting her original proposal of discontinuing traditional Standing Committee reports during meetings. She invited input from the commission and emphasized her commitment to honoring and encouraging members to continue their work within their standing committees.

Vice Chair Portillo-Knowles suggested an alternative approach to meet everyone's needs, suggesting that the subcommittees remain intact while identifying the top goals. Each subcommittee would then take the lead on one of these goals.

Commissioner Lynch highlighted the accountability role of subcommittee reports, emphasizing the need for documentation of their work. For instance, while the Cannabis subcommittee is tasked with city policy, decisions are sometimes made without consulting them.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy discussed Richmond's certification as a sustainable city and the upcoming expo to showcase this achievement, emphasizing its importance for the city's rebranding. The Vice Mayor expressed support for the commission's efforts, including the expo.

Commissioner Jackson stressed that goals should align with and support the subcommittees, rather than the other way around.

Commissioner Wear pointed out the lack of deliverables, goals, and accountability measures within subcommittees.

Commissioner Lynch highlighted the need for a structured community platform within the city, citing the subcommittees as the formal outlet for public engagement, particularly concerning topics like cannabis and sustainability.

Commissioner Portillo-Knowles suggested that subcommittees and commissioners attend council meetings to report on completed work, ensuring public visibility.

Commissioner Lee suggested that the agenda should clearly outline items up for a vote.

Commissioner Wear motioned to maintain the standing committees and reports as they currently exist, incorporating them into any new plans and goals for the upcoming year. Commissioner Sewell-Murphy moved to support. Vice Chair Portillo-Knowles seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Chair Wear recommended that subcommittees also prepare written reports.

b. 2024 Goal Setting

Chair Wear discussed that in January 2024, the commission held a brainstorming session. The objective of that discussion was to select the top three goals from that session, outlining tangible actions and determining which subcommittees may undertake to further the commission's work.

Commissioner Jackson highlighted that **youth** was a key topic discussed in the brainstorming session and should be addressed in the goal-setting session.

Commissioner Lynch emphasized that one overarching goal supporting all commission efforts is small business support. One proposed deliverable is the development of a brochure. Lynch suggested creating an annual report to present the commission's ideas and proposals to the Council. Sustainability was also identified as a significant goal, with suggestions to engage consultants for expert advice. Commissioner Lynch stressed the importance of robust discussions and engaging consultants to achieve these goals.

Commissioner Willis discussed the potential involvement of **Roots of Success** as the inaugural cohort of the Green-Blue New Deal Workforce Development Plan. Supporting current businesses while attracting new ones was deemed crucial. Commissioner Willis also mentioned Justine Burt's next deliverable, the gap analysis.

Commissioner Portillo-Knowles addressed the revitalization and usage of the convention center, auditorium, and other facilities. Commissioner Sewell-Murphy also mentioned her proposal to host the Expo at the convention center.

Commissioner Portillo-Knowles also mentioned the importance of receiving pros and cons of proposals and having the option to dissect proposals if they benefit Richmond.

Commissioner Lynch provided a high-level overview of goals and actions. One goal is small business support and the actions would be 1) developing brochure, 2) present goals to council, 3) identify projects and businesses to highlight, mainly around areas of youth development, homelessness, and community resources, and 4) engage in sustainability experts (consultants working on Green Blue New Deal and Gap analysis, consultants for sustainable construction in areas such as the convention center, etc.)

Commission will continue the conversation at future meetings.

Report from City Council:

Councilmember Zepeda provided a report. Councilmember Zepeda discussed a goal to engage with small businesses in Richmond, emphasizing the importance of reminding them about available resources and city ordinances, including the ban on plastic food ware. This can be in the form of a brochure or one-pager. Despite the regulation against plastic food ware, many businesses continue to use plastic. Ways to address this issue includes distributing samples of non-plastic alternatives and offering to buy back plastic food ware are being explored to promote compliance and sustainability. Currently, a draft is underway for further development.

Public Comments/Announcements/Handouts

Chair Wear announced the Richmond Sisters in Solidarity event scheduled for Saturday, March 16th, from 10 AM to 2 PM at Lavonya Dejean Middle School.

Vice Chair Portillo-Knowles informed about the Public Service Awards Dinner for Police and Fire hosted by Kiwanis on March 22nd.

Commissioner Lynch shared news about former Commissioner Ayoka Nurse's new dispensary, Urban Soyal, making her the first Black woman to own a dispensary in Contra Costa County.

Chair Wear concluded the meeting with a quote from Michelle Obama: "no country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half of its citizens."

Next Meeting: April 10th, 2024, 11:30 PM

6. Adjournment: 12:54 PM