



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

### Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 10, 2024, 11:30AM – 1:00PM

Richmond Room, 450 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, California

#### 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Call to Order: 11:30 am by Chair Wear

#### 2. Roll Call & Check In

A quorum was present with the following commission members:

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

**Absent:** A. Huie, C. Jackson, R. Yazdi

**Council Liaison:** Cesar Zepeda

#### 3. Approval of Minutes

March Meeting Minutes

1st – G. Sewell Murphy, 2nd – D. Thompson

#### 4. Old and/or New Business

a. Deputy Chief of Staff, Tony Tamayo, Update from Mayor's Office

Deputy Chief of Staff, Tony Tamayo from the Mayor's Office and Boukhay were not able to make it to the meeting for a presentation.

b. Goal Setting

Goal for the meeting was to finalize concrete goals for the EDC to accomplish in 2024, in addition to establishing measures of accountability and deliverables. Prior to the meeting, Councilmember Zepeda proposed to the Chair that the Council collectively set goals during their strategic meeting. He suggested that the EDC align its goals with the Council's strategic priorities, ensuring synergy. The intention is to attend city council meetings, advocating for our principles and initiatives, and aligning them with the council's objectives.

Lizeht emphasized that while advocating for businesses, residents remain a priority. She also highlighted Nannette Beacham, the Director of Economic Development, as a knowledgeable resource on housing issues. During the meeting, each commissioner shared their reasons for joining the commission and their preferred areas of emphasis for major goals.

Commissioner Willis shared his background in workforce development, having worked in the Office of Economic and Workforce in San Francisco for the past 7-8 years, with a focus on policy and workforce issues. He emphasized the importance of creating a more economically resilient community, highlighting the integral role of a skilled workforce in attracting businesses. Commissioner Willis expressed interest in goals related to business attraction, support, workforce development, and initiatives such as the Richmond Green Blue New Deal.

Commissioner Zepeda expressed a desire for more business-friendly policies in the city, aiming to convey to businesses that Richmond welcomes their presence and wants to facilitate their success. He also underscored the delicate balance between advocating for businesses and prioritizing residents.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy shared her personal connection to Richmond, having grown up in the city and returning to care for her mother, who was deeply involved in the community. Inspired by her mother's work, Commissioner Sewell-Murphy sought opportunities to contribute to Richmond's growth and revitalization. Her background in arts and culture further motivated her involvement in the Economic Development Commission, with a focus on fostering positive change and aiding Richmond in reaching its full potential.

Commissioner Thompson shared his journey of moving to Richmond with his wife in 1998. Initially, his wife was deeply involved in the neighborhood council, while Commissioner Thompson himself became intrigued by the city's politics and potential for prosperity. After concluding a career with the federal government's Energy Department in 2017, where he oversaw physical security, cybersecurity, and emergency preparedness for the office responsible for Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, he sought avenues to contribute to the community. Originally interested in the Point Molate Commission, which was suspended, Commissioner Thompson found alignment with the Economic Development Commission's objectives and joined. He noted several complementary opportunities, particularly in projects like the Green Blue New Deal Workforce Plan, specifically focusing on strategic goals 1, 2, and 5.

Commissioner Lee expressed his motivation for joining the commission, driven by the desire to attract businesses to Richmond. He lamented the current situation where residents often leave the city for retail and shopping, resulting in a loss of revenue. Commissioner Lee envisioned the commission as a proactive decision-making body, akin to the planning commission. He proposed a scenario where developers consult the EDC first, allowing the commission to vet developers and communicate expectations and preferences. Commissioner Lee highlighted a missed opportunity during the passage of Measure U, where the EDC was not involved in significant discussions that impacted numerous businesses.

Commissioner Kenney shared her journey to the commission, initially engaging in social media for Demnlus Johnson upon his entry into office. Witnessing impactful political engagement in her age group sparked her interest. For Commissioner Kenney, community has always been a driving force, and at the heart of economic development lies familiarity with Richmond's businesses. Her experience organizing the Taste of Richmond event revealed a disconnect, as many participating restaurants were unaware of EDC initiatives. Commissioner Kenney emphasized the importance of attracting new businesses and fostering brand partnerships to enhance Richmond's appeal. She cited instances where outdoor enthusiasts chose not to hike in Richmond due to limited dining options afterward. Additionally, she lamented the challenges faced by peers from Richmond who find it easier to do business elsewhere due to perceived barriers and lack of incentives.

Commissioner Kenney's focus on intergenerational business, community development, and partnerships underscores their commitment to revitalizing Richmond. She stressed the need to address downtown's food desert status and advocated for rebranding efforts to showcase the city's potential, both locally and through the EDC.

Commissioner Portillo-Knowles emphasized her focus on advocating for the downtown corridor and supporting small businesses, particularly those owned by Black, Brown, and BIPOC individuals. Her role within the EDC is to amplify the needs of small businesses and serve as their representative in various forums, including City Council meetings and the commission itself. She ensures that their concerns and challenges are given prominence and addressed effectively. Additionally, as a member of the Business Improvement District, she advocates for the allocation of funds back into the district where stakeholders have invested through special tax assessments. Commissioner Portillo-Knowles actively engages in discussions, asking critical questions to ensure that resources are utilized appropriately. Goals 2, 3, and 5 resonate strongly with her, as they align with her priorities of supporting small businesses, fostering economic vitality, and contributing to revitalization efforts.

Commissioner Lynch highlighted the significant role of the cannabis industry, noting disparities where the majority of business owners are white men while many Black and Brown individuals remain incarcerated for related offenses. They expressed concern over the lack of implementation of the reparations plan passed in 2021. The cannabis subcommittee is dedicated to supporting the council and emphasizing that cannabis can serve as a vehicle to address various goals and facilitate social justice initiatives.

Chair Wear will take all the discussion topics and will plan at the next meeting to hone in on the ideas and chose one to three of the items.

- c. New Business  
None-

## **5. Subcommittee**

- a. Sustainability: Businesses/Industrial Hemp & Expo/Assessment  
Commissioner Sewell-Murphy mentioned submitting the framework for the Expo a year ago and will be presenting an updated version at the May meeting.
- b. Policy Green/Blue New Deal  
The Policy Subcommittee is currently awaiting updated information from Justine Burt, particularly regarding the city's progress in accepting the implementation plan and gap analysis. Additionally, the Roots of Success cohort is scheduled to graduate in May, and efforts are underway to assist them in finding host employers.
- c. Community Engagement

Councilmember Zepeda and Chair Wear are currently collaborating on small business outreach efforts, including door-to-door visits. During the meeting, Chair Wear inquired about the existence of a logo for the initiative. If none exists, she asked if any commission members would be willing to contribute their skills to create one.

d. Taste of Richmond

The Taste of Richmond event has been scheduled for July 13th, with planning meetings set to commence in May. The commission extended an open invitation for members to join the subcommittee involved in organizing the event. One proposed idea is to host a restaurant week leading up to the Taste of Richmond, enhancing anticipation and participation. A comprehensive report on the progress will be provided in May.

e. Cannabis

Commissioner Lynch shared updates from her conversation with the Mayor regarding cannabis-related matters. Additionally, they expressed their efforts to revitalize the cannabis subcommittee and establish regular, formal meetings with the economic development department to ensure consistency and collaboration.

**Report from City Council:**

Councilmember Zepeda provided a brief report during the meeting. He mentioned receiving a text inquiry about a potential restaurant week. Considering the ongoing work on Taste of Richmond and the concept of organizing a restaurant week, Councilmember Zepeda proposed additional ideas such as offering incentives to patrons and collecting metrics to measure participation and impact. Additionally, Councilmember Zepeda addressed the moratorium concerning tobacco and smoke shops in Richmond.

**Public Comments/Announcements/Handouts**

Chair Wear thanked the commission, expression her appreciation to everybody for bringing their full experience, ideas, and enthusiasm to the conversation.

Commissioner Willis shared information about a café named El Jardín de Sueños.

**Next Meeting:** May 8th, 2024, 11:30 PM

**6. Adjournment:** 1:00 PM